

**AN ANALYSIS OF STAFF RESPONSES TO
THE MERGER AT
UNIVERSITY OF KWA ZULU-NATAL
(UKZN).**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of a
coursework Master of Arts in

Social Policy

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment (*delete whichever is applicable*) of the requirements for the degree of **MASTERS** , in the Graduate Programme in

SOCIAL POLICY , University of KwaZulu-Natal,

South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was / was not used (*delete whichever is applicable*) and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of **MASTER OF ARTS (SOCIAL POLICY)** in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges and opportunities that face the merging of Higher Education institutions with the focus on staff's responses to the merger at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). The focus of the study was based on staff's attitudes and their varying experiences since the merging of former University of Durban Westville (UDW) and University of Natal (UN) forming the new institution of UKZN. It examines the barriers, challenges and opportunities of the Heads of School, Academic staff and Administrative staff in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS) and the Faculty of Management Studies. The study also reviewed the international or rather global experiences of mergers of Higher Education Institutions and brought into perspective examples of mergers such as in the UK, Australia, United States, Netherlands and Norway. The study then shifted focus to a much more local level in terms of UKZN in assessing the ethos of governance in terms of dialogue and inclusivity and how they perceived the merger of the two former institutions. Since the study is a qualitative, judgmental sampling technique was utilized in this study since it allowed me the researcher to use my own discretion as to who is in the best position to be knowledgeable about the subject under investigation. Therefore a structured interview was employed in this study with a set of inter-related questions, asked in the same order to all participants of this study. Issues of governance, mismanagement of finances, degree scandals, demoralized staff, wage disputes and academic freedom are some of the negative aspects that are perceived to riddle the new institution.

Abbreviations

CHT- Culture Heritage Tourism

DOE- Department of Education

GAFC- Governance Academic Freedom Committee

HAU- Historically advantaged University

HDU- Historically disadvantaged University

HDSS- Humanities Development and Social Sciences

HEFCE- Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEMSG- Higher Education Merger Study Group

IOLS- Industrial Organisational and Labour Studies

NMMU- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

RAU- Rand Afrikaans University

SPP- Social Policy Programme

TWR- Technikon Witwaterstrand

UCT- University of Cape Town

UDW- University of Durban Westville

UJ- University of Johannesburg

UK- United Kingdom

UKZN- University of Kwa Zulu- Natal

UN- University of Natal

UNISA- University of South Africa

USA- United States of America

Declaration

I, Soomaya Khan declare this as my own work and that all acknowledgements have been properly made.

Signed:

Soomaya Khan

26 November, 2010

Supervisor's Declaration

I, Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (Ph.D.) declare that I have supervised this project to the best of my ability, and I am satisfied that it is now ready for examination.

Signed:

Ruth Teer-Tomaselli

26 November, 2010

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CHAPTER ONE

TAKING STOCK OF THE UKZN MERGER: OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The merger of universities was planned, designed and planned with the objective of bringing about the excellence in the South African higher landscape. In this effort, education legacy rooted in uneven quality and infrastructural gap, which manifested itself in a sector divided along the lines of historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, would be rectified. However, the task was underestimated considering the contradictions fraught in the purpose and process associated with attaining academic excellence and social responsibility of historically advantaged universities.

Mergers of higher education have been taking place throughout the world and many have been difficult. According to the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (25:07:03) “the longer the process goes on, the greater the risk of arguments becoming breaking points”. Against this global background, the merger of higher education institutions in South Africa was spearheaded by Professor Kader Asmal, the then-Minister of Education. On 1 January 2004 the University of Durban Westville (UDW) and the University of Natal (UN) merged to form the new University of KwaZulu – Natal (UKZN). The former institution was categorized as a historically disadvantaged institution (HDI) and the latter a historically advantaged university (HAU). Both these institutions were a conscious creation of the apartheid government in providing tertiary institutions for the different racial groups. “A merger can be deemed as successful, if among other things it creates new institutions with new identities and cultures that transcends their past racial and ethnic institutional histories and contributes to their deracialisation” (Jansen, 2004:7). With the merger, UKZN had to restructure many of principle issues in respect of governance, as well as administrative, organizational, spatial and other

important aspects of university's life and scholastic endeavours. These have been of both structural and functional in nature.

The restructuring of higher education is not new at all; it is something that has taken place globally. The merger between the two institutions has been influenced by a variety of global trends. Yau Tsai Fooyin from the University of Taiwan and Sue Beverton from Durham University in the United Kingdom argue that education, as one of the major policy areas of most countries in the world, is not immune from global issues (Fooyin and Beverton, 2007). In an evaluation of the Norwegian State College reforms, senior faculty and administrators expressed the opinion that the reform had resulted in increased efficiency and professionalism in the administration. American merger studies shows that both public and private institutions have achieved their goals regarding economic savings. Private higher education institutions were able to avoid bankruptcy and total closures; nevertheless, they often had problems with regards to maintaining their identity in the newly merged organization and they achieved less as a joint institution than the sum of the two previous institutions (Skodvin, 2005). In response to one particular global development, that of marketisation, universities throughout the world in the twenty-first century have already faced unprecedented challenges and most of them in response have sought to make some major changes or reforms (Yau Tsai Fooyin and Berveton, 2007). Some of the major reforms with regards to the merger of institutions of higher learning relate to 'rationalization', 'cost – efficiency', 'outsourcing', 'corporatization' and 'employment flexibility'. Some of the key elements have been the 'rationalization' of staff numbers in terms of a liberal mode and 'downsizing' a euphemism for reducing a number of staff members; the institutional amalgamation of small institutions and the commercialization of education principles. The fear of many academic and support staff around the realities of '*rightsizing*' and '*restructuring*', including the effects of retrenchments, contract-work and outsourcing, has weighed heavily on institutions of higher learning worldwide. This has affected all merging Universities. In the case of UKZN for example, administrative employees regarded as 'surplus to requirements' were placed in a 'pool', whilst waiting to be 'matched and

placed'. The fortunate ones were matched and placed relatively quickly, while the least fortunate took a period up to two years before finding a suitable placement. Wisdom J Tettey (2006:3) argues that there is a direct correlation between staff stress and merging institutions. He notes that:

That the problem of academic staff retention plaguing the Institution emanates from the dissatisfaction with salaries and working conditions. These key factors undermine the commitment of academics to their institutions and their careers, and consequently their decision to leave. Therefore, institutions should work towards improving the working conditions (salary and non-salary) of staff, as this will result in [greater] levels of job satisfaction.

The working hypothesis of this study is that since there is a substantial body of prior evidence to suggest that mergers in other institutions of higher learning, both in South Africa and globally, have resulted in high levels of staff stress and dislocation, that it is probable that these phenomena would be apparent within the KwaZulu-Natal situation.

Evidence from the literature is presented in Chapter Two; however, a brief summary is alluded to here in order to make an initial point. A study conducted by Jonathan Jansen, currently the Vice-Chancellor University of Free State, into the mergers of Higher education institutions revealed that

in many developing countries changes in higher education are often invoked by radical changes. In South Africa, the radical change of government accompanied the shift from apartheid state to a democratic state and therefore it had signaled widespread changes in Higher Education.

Jansen further argued that

the outcomes of mergers are seen as contingent on the political forces shaping and sustaining mergers. Lessons learnt from mergers in Higher Education are therefore dependent on the interaction of government macro-politics and institutional micro-politics. The state of macro-politics and institutional micro-politics and in understanding how each plays itself [out] is a key to understanding both the form and the future of the merger. Conditions under which mergers take place could suggest that it could be more or less effective in attaining institutional goals. (Jansen, 2002:159)

The research questions in this study are seen in a particular set of circumstances, a given University culture and an historical period. Thus, I have taken into account both the national macro-political situation during the period 2005-2009, which demarcates the period from the beginning of the merger until the time I completed my interviews, as well as the institutional micro-politics within the two founding universities and the present University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Research Problems and objectives: Key questions to be asked

The present research investigates the following specific questions:

- How staff have responded to the challenges and opportunities to the merger;
- How former UDW staff and former UND staff members perceive the merger of the two former institutions;
- How staff responded to the management style adopted at the merged university;
- What the opinions of staff members are on the issue of the ethos of governance at UKZN in terms of dialogue and inclusivity.
- How staff perceive the new challenges that have emerged in the post merger phase;
- How staff have responded to these challenges; and
- How staff have been affected by changes in geographical locations.

The key objective of the dissertation is to gauge the responses of a carefully selected, all-inclusive, heterogeneous group of staff, both academic and administrative, on various campuses in order to ascertain their personal feelings, responses, attitudes and perceptions towards the merger. It is with objectives in mind that the questionnaire was structured. As with all social scientific research, both the past and present can be used as a yardstick of predicting the future of the institution. Since the merger of universities, it would appear that, the mergers in general and the one under investigation in particular have struck a rock against the consequences of neo-liberal policies. The allegedly top-down management style since the merger has left staff effectively marginalized. However, this is seen as hostile to the culture of universities. This has been expressed as follows: "This is seen when two higher education institutions with different historically and cultural backgrounds are forced to merge by the Department of Education." (Kistan, 2005:241-250). Therefore, the challenge of merging institutions with different cultures can be a complex situation. Thus, it is fitting that the key questions that form the core synthesis of the study pertain to the issue of governance and the notion of academic freedom.

Caveat on the present research

The main thrust of the merger took place during the years 2005-2007. By the time the present research was undertaken, much of the initial anxiety and dislocation had subsided. These circumstances provided the researcher both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity was that the participants of the research were able to look back with some sense of objectivity and reflection on the developments that had affected their professional lives. The challenge lay in the fact that many of their perceptions became entangled in their present circumstances. The period 2007 going forward heralded a number of difficulties for the University, including issues of governance, alleged mismanagement of finances, degree scandals, budget deficits, exodus of senior academics, demoralized staff, wage disputes, and academic freedom. Hence, such real or perceived aspects directly related to the responses of the

participants were in many cases were unable to separate merger-related issues to other more immediate concerns. While the happenings of 2007-2008 are beyond the scope of the present study, the reader may from time to time recognize allusions to some of these events.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the purpose of this research. The aims and objectives and the hypothesis of the study have been presented. The following chapter focuses on the literature review that centers on international, national, and local literature concerning mergers of higher institutions, which will be used to contextualize the UKZN study.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL EXPERIENCES OF MERGERS: A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

The first chapter of this dissertation outlined the research problem. The present chapter will highlight the international perspective on mergers of higher education in order to provide a context to the current study. It will discuss the international experiences of mergers and will account for the changes that were brought about by mergers on education systems nationally and internationally. The researcher will attempt various case studies within the objective of identifying some positive and negative aspects of mergers. In addition to the international experience, this chapter will also highlight the South African experience, recounting what was hoped to be achieved by mergers and the costs that accompany the process within institutions of higher education. Given the space limitations imposed by university rules of the short dissertation it needs to be understood that the present treatise could not be seen and considered as comprehensive.

Throughout the world, the higher educational landscape learning has experienced high degrees of economic and social transformation over the past few decades. One of the reasons of such realities has been the merging of individual higher education institutions with the purpose of creating larger, more effective and efficient entities in their endeavours to expand their influence in the spheres of teaching and learning, knowledge production and research. Evidence of this is chronicled by Harman and Meek (2002) who noted that “many countries have been affected by such changes(mergers) – Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Vietnam, New Zealand and Australia”. It is vital to mention that the process of merging brings about significant amount of stresses in the areas of economic, political and social alteration for the particular institutions involved. For that reason, Harman and

Meek (2002) poignantly stated, “No institutional leader or system policy maker should contemplate mergers lightly”. Merging of higher education institutions requires extensive planning and organizing as well as the consideration of the consequences that may surface as a result of fusing institutional cultures and histories found amongst the merging entities and in co-opting the respective staff components into new routines and ethos’s. In recognition of the above, Harman and Meek (2002) propound that “concentrate on the culture conflicts and the human dimension of mergers”. However, it needs to be said that this does not in any essence reflect that successful cultural and ethnic infusion in the process of mergers cannot be achieved.

Why mergers of higher education

In today’s globalizing world where rapid socio-economic, technological and informational changes are taking place, the fate and future of Higher Education Institutions is uncertain. The post-1994 dispensation in South Africa has seen the Higher_Education sector struggling to reform and transform itself. Lucian van der Walt (2003) argued that the logic of rationalization, cost-efficiency and out-sourcing in merged universities becomes the generalized mode of operation. Hence, Van der Walt posed a simple question: “whose gain, whose pain and who’s transforming?” In some cases this transformation is accompanied by marketing the universities as commercial brands and one can refer to this as ‘corporatization’ of higher education institutions. In relation to the latter, Jane Duncan (2007:5) stated that

when a university is corporatized (sic), power is sucked to the top, and is often centralized in the person of the Vice-Chancellor. The university becomes a brand in the commercial sense. Corporatized universities also are hostile places for students from working class background, who are often excluded for financial reasons. As the university becomes more market-driven, it may also loses its moorings in the very community it claims to serve.

Thus, it is her contention that through corporatization, the top-down management approach and financial interest become the main driving elements of a corporatized university.

Agha (2006), commenting on research that was commissioned by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on improving sector efficiency in an era of public expenditure reform, notes that in recent times public sector education around the world has been introduced to a set of reforms based on ideas of competition, private market discipline, openness, accountability and result-orientated approaches. This is collectively known as “New Public Management” (NPM). Destefano and Crouch (2006) argue that reforms efforts need to concentrate on how the institutional environment does or does not support the intended changes, and, more importantly, reforms need to define specific strategies for altering the institutional environment so that implementation is actually feasible. George Haddad (2005), on the other hand, a one-time UNESCO Director of Higher Education, argued from his years of experience with government policies that higher education is becoming increasingly commercialized, at both an institutional and global levels. An example of this trend is the rapid infiltration of higher education institutions by foreign-based educational providers. South Africa is not in the forefront of this movement. Nevertheless, foreign providers such as the Australian Education group, Monash Universities, have found it profitable to enter the South African market. Commercial providers are more likely to provide “support” tuition for distance learning students, who typically write their examinations through the University of South Africa (UNISA). Many countries have curtailed their public sector investments in higher education.

From an international stance, McBain (2009) argued that the American higher education system is known for its focus on cost efficiency. Therefore, cost efficiency is the vital underlying notion of the private and public higher education sectors. Daniel et al (2006) have indicated in the case of the World Bank, for instance, has until recently discouraged countries from investing in higher education. Instead, it has urged them to

focus their efforts on basic education, which the Bank saw as having greater development benefits¹ and potential. In response to the World Bank demands South Africa, for example, decided to reduce funding of universities. Van Der Walt (2003) noted that “it is against the backdrop of this Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDI) crisis – and of the drive to further reduce funding to the universities - that the state refused to increase funding, choosing instead, from 2002 onwards, to emphasize the need to reduce the number of universities and technikons from 36 to 21 through mergers and closures”. As a result, there has been a rapid local and global up-taking of the mergers within the objective of achieving cost efficiency.

Across time and space, countries have responded to the social, economical and technological changes through the merging of higher learning institutions. Skodvin (1999) contends, “that the demands for greater efficiency, higher quality and reductions in public budgets have meant that continually more countries are looking closely at the structure of their higher education systems, and this has often resulted in extensive reforms”. An enlightening example of the merging of higher education institutions can be drawn from countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Germany, United States of America (USA) and the Netherlands to name a few. In terms of international perspectives and comparisons, some mergers have been deemed successful while others have been hindered by challenges that could not be overcome. As a precursor to

¹ Sir John Daniel is president and CEO of the [Commonwealth of Learning](http://www.commonwealthoflearning.org), an agency created by Commonwealth heads of government to help developing countries expand access to learning through the use of technology. After 17 years as a university president in Canada (Laurentian University) and the United Kingdom (The Open University), he was assistant director-general for education at UNESCO from 2001-04. Asha Kanwar, vice president of the Commonwealth of Learning, joined the organization in 2003 as an education specialist for higher education. Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic is chief of the section for higher education reform, innovation and quality assurance at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where she works with the Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications. <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/change>

this study, the researcher will attempt to identify the positive and negative aspects of mergers of higher education internationally.

Experiences of mergers in a global context

The literature illustrates the fact that the primary challenges presented to the underlying merging process are predicated upon the restructuring and transformation of higher learning institutions. Within this analytical framework, the productivity and success of the merged institutions have been attributed to the mergers being voluntary and involuntary globally. A voluntary merger is “when the institutions themselves have initiated the merger, while the involuntary merger is when the instigator of the merger is external to the institution” (Skodvin, 1999: 66). In relation to the aforementioned statement, it could be argued that involuntary mergers would prove to be less productive compared to the voluntary mergers. It is therefore seen that the

Degree of voluntariness plays a part in the mergers. Experiences have shown that voluntary mergers are more successful than involuntary mergers as for instance in the latest mergers in the Netherlands, UK, Canada and Sweden are more successful than involuntary mergers in Australia, Netherlands, Finland and Norway. The involuntary mergers seem to be marked by a lack of positive profitability. (Skodvin, 1999:76)

Attributing the success of some of these countries solely to voluntariness would be methodologically simplistic, but one would have to consider the state of development and progress in those countries as they are perceived to be developed countries. Research has shown that the “Netherlands, Norway, UK, USA and Australia clearly shows that higher education institutions are not static units; the institutions are very sensitive to change in their environment and they adjust to it quickly” (Skodvin, 1999:71). Skodvin’s argument illustrates that higher education institutions in the above-mentioned countries are flexible and open to change.

For instance, in Norway, reform was based on a typically *forced* merger process and few staff supported the idea enthusiastically. As a result, several colleges tried to avoid being amalgamated with neighbouring institutions. Moreover, it can be argued that on many occasions it was felt that the distance to the administrative centre of the new state college would be too far, while other colleges feared that their ambitions to be granted university status would be effectively stopped by the incorporation into a state college (Kyvik, 2002). The colleges that were merged were very different from each other with regard to programmes, staff competence and research activities. A general experience from other mergers is that it takes a relatively long time before academic gains may be achieved (Harman and Meek 2002; Goedegebuure 1992; Skodvin 1999; cited in Kyvik 2002). These examples illustrate some of the pitfalls involved within the process of merging institutions of higher learning.

Against this backdrop, one of the great challenges in the London Metropolitan merger was to bring staff together even when they did not know each other that well or what the merger meant to them and their subject area (Floud and Corner, 2005). The 'mission and vision' of the resulting merger, specifically in the UK, brought about high levels of collegiality mainly because the merger was voluntary. In the merging of higher education institutions, the addressing of past histories and culture is of great importance. The merging of the London Guildhall University and the University of North London proved to be positive because the past problems were addressed as part of the merger-related changes. The process also allowed for greater emphasis on affective human resource system as well as the chance to put into place new procedures and frameworks. The resultant new London Metropolitan University gave rise to collaboration, alliances and partnerships at all levels, which were seen as a positive feature. At the level of interpersonal relationships, three issues became paramount: firstly, managing effective communication; secondly, planning, implementing and motivating change; thirdly, coming to terms with what it meant to be a 'teaching-led university' (Floud and Corner, 2005:8-9). This example illustrates the necessity for a concerted programme of action in merging and merged institutions that would be able to

address adequately and effectively the stresses of the movement into a single new institution, and overcoming the resistance of staff who felt that they were not consulted sufficiently and were still suspicious of change (Floud and Corner, 2005:8). Thus, despite its setbacks, the overall progress of this merger was plausible.

Not differing much from the London Metropolitan University experience, mergers in USA have exhibited a number of positive elements and the strategies utilised have been successful. “American mergers are often by ‘bottom-up processes’ characterised by high degree of openness and strategic planning. The scepticism and insecurity of participants was reduced by including them in the decision making processes” (Skodvin, 1999: 76). The bottom-up approach that was adopted by the USA has been successful because it has incorporated staff in the decision making process that led to the provision of a platform upon which openness, transparency and effective communication could be achieved.

In contrast to the London Metropolitan experience, the mergers of Australian universities have been unique. An Australian newspaper, *The Age*, stated that according to a study by the Australian National Tertiary Education Union,

Our universities are becoming centres of stress rather than centres of excellence.... A recent study for the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs indicates that high levels of stress, low morale and low levels of job satisfaction are rife in Australian universities... Many academics complain that administrative work is a serious distraction from their core activities of teaching and research... any country that aspires to develop a competitive, knowledge-based economy should put great store in education, especially advanced education... the evidence indicates that the principle of user-pays and the cuts to higher education funding under the Howard government have gone too far. When academics do not have the time to spend on “cutting edge” research, this is detrimental to national competitiveness ... when those charged with imparting

knowledge are under stress, this affects [the] quality of teaching and eventually the status of degrees.... Undermining morale and increasing stress levels is not the way to attract and retain the best minds we have. (*The Age*. Wednesday, July 19, 2000:14)

In light of the above article, it can be argued that Australian universities have experienced much difficulty in adjusting to the reality of new merged institutions. It can be recognized that the high levels of stress that academics experience is inextricably linked to low levels of job satisfaction. As a response to that, Skodvin argued that “today one of the issues in higher education policy in Australia is how to create greater academic diversity” (Skodvin, 1999:74). He further argued that stress and tensions could have implications on academic development within merged institutions.

In Canada, it has been argued that one of the challenges that universities will face over the next decade or so is academic recruitment and retention (Carleton University, 2000, The Laurier institution, 2000). However it has been suggested that “in Australia that early in the 21st century there will be a crisis in their higher education with an estimated academic labour shortage of 20,000 if this trend is not addressed” (Mathews, 2003: 313). It can be seen that academic staff retention is a very serious concern and that recruitment appears to be a bigger challenge. Therefore job satisfaction is central in enhancing academic staff satisfaction. Geographical distance is one of the pivotal underlying issues that determine the success of the merged institutions. Rowley (1997) argues that the distance between the campuses within the merged institutions has at times enabled two distinctive cultures to cohabit.

The South African National Experience of Mergers

The debate on the nature and challenges associated with merging experiences indicates that they are not specific to international institutions, but have also been initiated within South African higher education institutions. There is a high correlation globally between excellent higher education and overall national achievement in

development, growth, competitiveness and welfare. According to Riane Esiler (2007) in her book entitled *The real wealth of nations: Creating a caring economy*, “investing in human beings is the best way to enhance productive capacities, profit and efficiencies”. Her study indicates that a 10% increase in the levels of higher education translates in an 8.6% in productivity and a 3.4% increase in the levels of capital stock. In South Africa, the crucial challenge is to ensure that higher education can play this role: “that it can succeed in stimulating, directing and utilizing the creative and intellectual energies of the entire population” (*Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation December 1996*).

Over the past ten years, higher education in South Africa has undergone significant transformation, with government demanding fewer, larger and more effective and efficient universities that are designed to better meet specific national needs in the post-apartheid era (Harman & Meek, 2002). This has resulted in merging of institutions and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) is a product of one of the many mergers that took place in the first five years of the 21st century.

The objective of the South African mergers was to initiate growth, that is, to increase the number of students and staff to provide more, rather than fewer, opportunities (Floud and Corner, 2005). Within this local stance, the *South African Higher Education Report (2004)*² defined mergers of higher learning institutions “as the combination of two or more separate institutions into a single new organisational entity, in which control rests with a single governing body and a single chief executive body, and whereby all assets, liabilities, and responsibilities of the former institutions are transferred to the single new institution” (Hall et al, 2004). A radical reform of South African higher education started concomitantly with other social changes immediately after the first democratic elections

² [Higher Education Act: Merger of public higher education institutions: University of Transkei, Border Technikon and Eastern Cape Technikon](#), G 27115, GeN 1465, 17 December 2004

of 1994. Higher education was confronted with social, political and economic demands, arising from both local and global environments, of a kind not encountered during the apartheid era. The initial focus was on government policy as the main driver of change, informed by a participatory policy formulation process and implemented by a new, progressive bureaucracy. Changes in higher education institutions followed a variety of routes that resulted in certain apartheid differences being accentuated and new differences emerging in the institutional landscape.

The South African Higher Education Amendment Act of 2002 states that merging institutions are required to give to the Minister assurances of their efforts to comply with labour legislation in the merger process. The Higher Education Act provides *inter alia* that contracts of employment are automatically transferred to the merged institution and that the rights and obligations of employer and employee continue unchanged after the merger however, pre-merger rationalisation may nonetheless occur in terms of operational requirements (Hall et al, 2004).

In a 2002 speech, the then Minister of Education Professor Kader Asmal announced the amalgamation of higher education institutions in South Africa which were to be implemented. A total number of nine institutions were merged to incorporate both universities and technikons in South Africa. According to the *White Paper* this amalgamation emerged “to redress the past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities” (Errol Tyobeka *Mail and Guardian* 15:10:2009). In addition to the goals stated in the *White Paper*, Kilfoil and Groenewald (2005) argued that “the purpose maybe that of overcoming the racial fragmentation of the higher education system”. In South Africa there was a need for reconstruction and development and as a result mergers were and seen as a complex and dynamic process.

One of the prominent mergers that took place in South Africa was that of Durban–Westville and University of Natal giving rise to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The UKZN merger brought about new opportunities and hope for the previously disadvantaged and marginalised individuals. On one hand, the former University of Natal emphasised the importance of high standards while the former University of Durban-Westville sought to provide access to the underprivileged communities in the apartheid regime. The aim of the merger was to create a ‘Premier University of African Scholarship’ as stated in its vision. However, the process has been fraught with contradictions and negative publicity, which throws into question the credibility of the university’s vision and mission statement.

According to Malegapuru Makgoba, the Vice-Chancellor who oversaw the merger, one of the challenges faced by UKZN at the time was “to confront and eliminate the current pernicious and dominant conservative, medieval, monastic and racist notion about a university and knowledge production that often masquerade as liberalism” (Makgoba, *Mail and Guardian* 15.10.2009). In addition, Makgoba asserted that the “cultural differences on each of the campuses tends to be compounded by race”. It is not surprising that merged institution experienced cultural and racial conflict because merging includes the infusion of different cultures and this is therefore seen as an integral part of a radical reform and transformation that does not guarantee any success. In support of the above “compatibility of culture is to be a key issue when choosing a partner to merge. In higher education, institutions had no choice of partners, but were forced to merge by legislation” (Kistan, 2005:2). As illustrated in the literature some institutions internationally were merged involuntarily and as a result, they lacked positive profitability. Similarly, in South Africa in the case of UKZN one might argue that the merging was imposed by legislation and thus was not voluntary. However, if the merger between institutions is voluntary and if all the cultural differences are addressed prior to the merger, then the merger itself would be more likely to yield productivity and can be perceived as successful. In a general sense, the merging of institutions was to create a new landscape for higher education in South Africa.

What was hoped to be achieved by mergers, internationally and locally

In a broader sense, Skodvin (1999: 66) argued, “[m]ergers took place both as a reaction to educational policy and as a result of competition between higher education institutions. In this connection one of the driving forces behind the mergers was the fear of weakened general access to resources”. Skodvin’s argument does not apply exclusively to international experiences but is also applicable to the South African experience. By merging higher learning institutions, the government hoped to “increase efficiency and effectiveness, especially in coping with rapid substantial growth in student numbers which in turn brings heavier demands on institutions” (Harman and Meek, 2002:1). At a local level, evidence of the above is captured from in the the *White Paper Three: A programme for the transformation of higher education* (1997). The vision enshrined this higher education system would be able to “meet the learning needs of our citizens and the reconstruction and development needs of our society and economy” (Mseleku, 2002:1). In explicit terms one must argue that the first objectives associated with the mergers were to accommodate the growing number of students; facilitating effective learning; and to promote positive transformation in South African higher learning institutions. These correspond to the main core function of a university that is teaching, learning and research.

Another aim that was hoped to be achieved by mergers was that of providing equal educational opportunities to all racial groups especially those that were previously disadvantaged and to bring about transformation in South African political policies. “Part of the cooperation of universities with the process in South Africa has to do with history – breaking away from the past discriminatory policies and supporting the mandate of the democratically elected government of social development and reform”³ (Mosia). Creating a truly Premier University of African Scholarship requires the government to

³ www.sasco.org.za/merger%20challengesstoppdf

address racial discrepancies in higher education institutions. Race has been an important factor in the merging of institutions. The National Plan of Higher Education states that “the purpose maybe that of overcoming the racial fragmentation of the higher education system” (South Africa, 2001:75). The merging of UKZN hoped to achieve a good strong sense of leadership, elimination of racial fragmentation through the introduction of racial diversity by achieving academic excellence. The offering of different programmes to cater for the wide student diversity and the improvement of the quality of graduates was of major importance at the new merged institution of UKZN.

The government anticipated that the merging process would carry with it a number of benefits which would contribute to the development of the social and economic spheres and realities of South Africa. Some of the anticipated benefits were the widespread establishment of good governance, equity and cost efficiency. It is an undeniable fact that good governance is the primary driving force behind the success of every institution. In simple and comprehensible terms, governance is the “process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented”⁴ . One would argue also that good governance entails the inclusion of all the staff of an institution on the decision making processes. Skodvin (1999:71) maintains that “mergers lead to an improvement in management, organisation and administration”. It was anticipated by the South African government that mergers would provide a platform upon which strong governance will ensue, thus allowing all structures of an institution to actively participate in the decision making processes of the university. In relation to the governance of UKZN, Tony Bruton (2005: 19), a stalwart trade union organiser, stated that “other features brought with a new managerialism include competition between cost centres and the formation of internal markets; encouraging team work; the introduction of targets (plans); intrusive monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness”. These

⁴ <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/projectactivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp>

contradictory elements were in addition to the core elements of good governance that incorporates accountability, transparency and participation.

The cost factor is perhaps one of the vital underlying aspects in the merging process. The success of merging institutions lies heavily in the availability of funds which assist in facilitating the process. Across the country, an estimated “R3 billion was budgeted to support the restructuring process, of which R1.8 billion was for direct cost of the merger, such as the integration of academic and administrative structures, improvement in overall information communication technology functionality as well as upgrading facilities” (Molapo Qhobela, *Mail and Guardian*, 14:10:2009) Within any merged institution costs would arise from renovations of buildings, improvement of communication systems, the building of new residences and other sundry expenses. All merged institutions shared in the availability of funds. For instance, the University of Limpopo received R278 million, of which R75 million went to the University’s medical school campus in Garankuwa. MEDUNSA. “The funding will be used to appoint more staff and to provide a solid and strong academic platform”, opined Molapo Qhobela, the Deputy Director-General of Higher Education (*Mail and Guardian*, 14.10.2009). UKZN “raised R195 million from the Department of Education (DoE) for merger related costs”, while the university’s government subsidy was increased to R75 million” (*UKZN Merger Report*, 2007:34). In addition to earmarked funding, “the government set aside funds marked for assisting merging institutions in a variety of ways. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), for example, applied and received funds for installing a new integrated telephone system for its various campuses, for integrating the IT system of its merging institutions and, in part, for covering some of the costs associated with severance package for staff” (Rolf Stump *Mail and Guardian*, 14:10:2009). Further to that, “The estimated cost of a merger of the ML Sultan Technikon and Natal Technikon proposed locations and required alterations or additions – when considered against the six different faculties and departments, was put at a cost of slightly more than 8 million” (Chalufu, 2002 :150). This is evidence that large capital infusion is vital in the integration of different higher education institutions into one coherently functioning institution.

In comparison, the London Metropolitan University had a “the business plan [which] estimated that the cost of implementing the merger, over a four year period would be about £13 million; the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) agree to provide a grant of £6.5 million” (Floud and Corner, 2005:2). Thus the entire merger cost within South Africa came to roughly the same as a single university in Britain. As argued earlier in this chapter, this provides a clear elucidation that the cost factor is the key to the consideration success of mergers.

Experiences of individual mergers have been quite unique. A study conducted at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) entitled *Academics’ experience of the pre-merger phase* (Goldman and van Tonder, 2006: 151) illustrated that the merger of Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and Technikon Witwatersrand (TWR) into the University of Johannesburg (UJ) supported the earlier finding that “mergers were politically and ideologically motivated” (Mokadi, 2002). Results emanating from Goldman and van Tonder’s (2006: 151) findings also illustrated that “ex RAU staff harboured generally very positive sentiments towards this institution resulting in positive institutional predisposition. Evidence suggests that levels of job satisfaction were generally quite high among the staff of this institution.” The aforementioned quotation reveals that not all mergers of higher education are unsuccessful. In comparison to the Australian experience of low levels of job satisfaction noted previously in this chapter, the University of Johannesburg experienced exceptionally high levels of job satisfaction amongst its staff vis-a vis the proposed and impending merger of the institutions.

The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University experienced much difficulty in satisfying their staff. According to the Rolf Stump, *Mail and Guardian* 14:10:2009)

the greatest challenge for NMMU lay in merging three set of staff structures, and in harmonising three set of conditions of employment within the strict confines of the Labour Relations Act. About 15 staff members had to be retrenched after all the avenues and options had failed. These factors caused great personal tension

and distress, as well as severe institutional trauma, negatively affecting work performance.

Again, this quotation underscores how crucial Human resource capacity and staff retention are in maintaining the smooth functioning of any institution.

Major challenges also faced the merging of former University of the North West, Potchefstroom University and the Sebokeng Campus of Vista, now known as North West University.

This institution was resistance to change and there were low levels of trust on all campuses. Notwithstanding this, some staff of the Mafikeng campus made allegations of 'Potchification', arguing that policies and procedures from the previous Potchefstroom University were forced on the Mafikeng campus. (Theuns Eloff, *Mail and Guardian* 15:10:2009)

It can be argued that integrating policies of formerly individual institutions into one policy that is relevant to the newly merged entity can be a tricky business. Despite all these difficulties and challenges, the objectives of successfully merging institutions have been adhered to.

Before beginning the empirical research on staff of UKZN's perceptions of the merger, this research surveyed a number of writings and published opinions on the state of the mergers both within and outside the South African experience. The purpose of this exercise was to provide a point of departure upon which the empirical investigation will be based on and to identify the opinions, information, misinformation and mythologies surrounding the staff perception of the merger. At the end of this chapter, these main themes will be summarised in order to subject them to the scrutiny of the findings which will emerge from the present empirical study. The sets of data gleaned from the prior articulations and those distilled from the present enquiry will then be compared and analysed.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on reviewing the international, or rather global, experience of mergers and their relationship with the South African realities. It has assessed the reasons behind the merging of higher education institutions at an international level and also accounted for the corporatisation of education institutions as a result of mergers. This chapter has also brought into perspective examples of the number of mergers that have taken place internationally with special focus given to the mergers that took place in the higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, United States of America and the Netherlands. In relation to the international experience, positive and negative aspects of mergers were also reviewed. The focus then shifted to the more local experience on mergers in which South Africa. The review placed much emphasis on assessing the logic that motivated the mergers that have taken place in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY: HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED, AND WHY THESE APPROACHES WERE CHOSEN

This chapter discusses the research methodology utilized in conducting this study. It will illustrate the research design, the location of study, the sampling population, the sampling methodology, the research procedures and data analysis. These methodological approaches will be used to analyze the data obtained from the participants of this research.

Research Design

The key purpose of this research has been to explore the perceptions and attitudes of staff responses to the merger at UKZN. Consequently, the qualitative approach was used as the primary method of data collection. Qualitative research “involves an in-depth investigation of knowledge” (Crix, 2004:119). Qualitative researchers “seek to amass information from their studies, with a view to discerning patterns, trends [and] relationships between key variables” (Crix, 2004:120). Alan Bryman defines qualitative research as “a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2004:266). The method is relevant to this study was able to generate a wealth of descriptive data.

Qualitative research makes possible the provision of different perceptions and attitudes of staff responses to the merger at UKZN as it facilitates a setting in which people can explain and describe their feelings and experiences which are the key objectives of this study. The qualitative method allows for questions such as how, why, when, who, what etc to be asked. Such questions play an incremental role when researching people’s perceptions and attitudes. Thus, the qualitative method is appropriate to this study because it provides a comprehensive reflection of what people think and feel. Such

reflections are hindered by statistics which are generated through the use of quantitative methods alone. Qualitative research is a broad approach in social research that is aimed at understanding and explaining human behavior; while quantitative gathering. (Activist Guide to Research and Advocacy, 2003)

Conceptual Framework: Constructivism and Grounded Theory

By its research design and processes, this research offers an exploratory study dealing with merger issues affecting the staff of UKZN. The framework used will be that of grounded constructivist theory as articulated in the works of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and applied successfully in South Africa in the seminal thesis of Soobrayan (2003).

The framework deals with qualitative research work that has been attacked by proponents of positivist and quantitative research over the years. The constructivist school has refined their conceptual framework in such a way as to identify procedures that would ultimately make their approach not only an acceptable and widely acknowledged research paradigm, but one that would be able to uncover realities and truths that quantitative frameworks alone frequently ignore. Through their emphasis on beliefs, opinions, attitudes and perceived or 'grounded' realities in the minds of the research subjects, constructivists build what they considered themselves as an 'objective' base for knowledge (Glaser 2001: 145)

Glaser put this aptly in respect of the relationship between theory and data:

'All is data' is a well-known Glaser dictum. What does it mean? It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is to be used for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate

description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties. (Glaser 2001: 145).

Qualitative analysis relies on data as expressed by the research subjects. Hence 'biased', 'subjective', 'objective', or 'misinterpreted' data are misnomers according to Glaser. They are the heart and soul of research, hence grounded theory as the basis of understanding the truth, or part of the truth as expressed by beliefs, attitudes, opinions and ideas. The personal predilections of interviewer and interviewee become the core as interview data yields the construction of data that represents the mutual interpretation of the interviewer and of the interviewee as the interview proceeds. Thus constructivist orientation is that data is constructed with interacting interpretations (Glaser, 1992).

The constructivist framework in grounded theory denotes an interpretation and construction of data, helping the researcher create explanatory frameworks within specific communities far away from which data are grounded (Soobrayan 2003: 12). Hence the interviewing is not a passive listening where the characterization of the data is interpretive based on the people's perspectives, which are multiple in nature in most cases. It is within this framework that Charmaz (2000:509-535) has written:

Constructivist grounded theory celebrates first hand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings.

Constructivism, in this sense, is built on the basis of an interactive, interpreted, produced data where the categories, concepts and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interactions within the field and questions about the data (

Charmaz 2000: 523). The emerging theory might be construed as the result of the researchers' own interpretative frameworks deduced from the data collected, but it needs to be said that the grounded theory in education needs to work in particular practical situations and fit the contexts being explored (Soobrayan 2003: 13)

To illuminate the sense of the above Charmaz (2000: 526) wrote that the grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. Thus in the research process the researcher composes the story which does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. In this context the story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed. The difference is that the researched tell the story and the researcher interprets it. Through the utilisation of comparisons the researcher conceptualizes the core category thus attempting to resolve and interpret the main question associated with the aims and objectives of the study through narrative constructions and reconstructions of experience (Charmaz 2000:514). Hence, data is rendered objective to a high degree by most research methods and especially Grounded Theory mainly by looking at many cases of the same phenomenon, jointly collecting and interpreting data, and transforming them into categories. In this sense there is a 'unity' between experience and the experiencing subject (Charmaz 2000: 515).

It is within this context that constructivist grounded theory assumes that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectic processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within the categories identified by through the data.

By adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach, the researcher can achieve the movement of grounded theory methods further into the realm of interpretation social science emphasising meaning, without assuming the existence of a un-dimensional external reality. A constructivist grounded theory thus recognizes the interactive nature of both data collection and analysis; resolves criticisms of the method; and reconciles positivist assumptions and postmodernist critiques. To put it differently, a constructivist grounded theory

fosters the development of qualitative traditions through study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it. (Charmaz 2000: 521-522).

Grounded theorists based on constructivism attempt to discover what research participants define as 'real' and where their definitions of reality take them. Hence, in more ways than one, the constructivist approach fosters our self consciousness about what we attribute to our subjects and how, when, and why researcher portray these definitions as real. Thus, the research products do not constitute the 'reality' of the respondents' reality; rather, each is a rendering, one interpretation among multiple interpretations, of a shared or individual reality. The application of the framework, hence, changes her conception of social life from a real world waiting to be discovered, tracked, and categorized to a world 'made real' in the minds and through the words and actions of its members (Charmaz 2000: 523). In this context, comparisons with existing literature on a particular subject are valuable, and in Charmaz's view, inevitable.

Constructing constructivism means seeking meanings — both respondent's meanings and researcher's meanings -- that lead to interpretations and subsequent analysis. To seek respondent's meanings, the researcher must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. It can be said, then, that the constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms. (Charmaz 2000: 525)

All research — the process and its products — depends on the characteristic of the persons involved: on their biological, mental, social, cultural and historical make-up and conditions. Hence, the researcher ought to describe, analyse and discuss this fundamental subjectivity of any knowledge, including so-called 'scientific' knowledge. Facing such epistemological and methodological challenges in a proactive way that takes in account this core characteristic of any form of knowledge, I, as researcher, have chosen the above conceptual framework as a tool used to achieve my aims and objectives within this study.

The Interview Method.

Interviews are the most commonly employed method to collect information from people. According to the *Activist Guide to Research and Advocacy* (2003:73) “interviews refers to any person- to- person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind”. The structured interview technique was utilized in this study. A structured interview is where “pre-determined questions are put to the interviewee in a specific order and the responses are logged either by recording electronically or by note taking” (Crix, 2007:127). Structured interviews were used as they achieve a high degree of standardization or uniformity. It is this device that ensures a relatively uniform delivery of questions or prompts (Crix, 2004:127). Uniformity prevents the researcher from going off the topic, and cuts down on irrelevant information. The use of structured interviews allowed for a free and open dialogue between the researcher and the interviewees. This approach also facilitated an active, value-laden and limitation-free discussion. It allowed the researcher to gain in depth-information about the university’s staff’s attitudes and perceptions on the merger. The interview technique paved the way for an open conversation.

An interview schedule was principally used with a set of inter- related questions asked in the same order to all respondents. For example I asked them what opportunities or limitations had been provided to them by the merger; what the effects on staff retention had been and the like. Questions were asked in a set order which brought specificity and focus to the study. As a researcher this served as a catalyst for me to gain knowledge from academic staff, Heads of School and administrative staff. All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder. The advantage of using an electronic recorder is that “it allows the researcher the opportunity to listen to the flow of discussion and the exact vocabulary used by informants” (*Activist Guide to Research and Advocacy*, 2003:74). Audio recording allowed the researcher to capture all the necessary information that was relevant to my study. Once all the information was recorded, the researcher transcribed all twenty-two interviews. Although transcribing is

time consuming it is nevertheless a helpful technique that allows the abstraction of all necessary data. The researcher is very aware that the research conducted is basically a sensitive and emotive issue for most staff at UKZN for a number of reasons that will be elaborated upon in other parts of the thesis. Hence there could be perceived or real issues associated with ethical dimensions of such research. The research was based on the findings emanating from a carefully selected, all inclusive, heterogeneous group of staff, both administrative and academic in two selected campuses. The two faculties chosen was not an arbitrary decision. It was done in consultation with my supervisor. Given the nature of the thesis and the nature of the sample and the choice of the qualitative nature of explanation and analysis, the number of prospective respondents is considered adequate. This is not a full scale thesis, but a mini dissertation that is an integral part of a combined post graduate degree comprising mainly of course-work, with the mini dissertation only a part of the overall outcome.

The researcher interviewed staff from two different faculties; that is the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS), and the Faculty of Management Studies. Amongst the reason for choosing these two faculties was because these two are among the largest faculties in the University; furthermore, many of the staff in them were transferred to different campuses during the merger. A large portion of the Faculty of HDSS moved from the Westville campus to the Howard College campus, while the Faculty of Management studies was consolidated in the Westville campus, with a significant number of people been transferred from Howard College to Westville. The choice of faculties thus was influenced by the need to identify staff members whose day-to-day lives had been altered by merger, and moving campuses appeared to be as good a indicator of this change as any other.

A second parallel sample, undertaken with the research instrument (interview schedule) developed by myself, was drawn from the Faculty of Science on both the Howard College and the Pietermaritzburg campuses; and members of the Library Administration on the Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses.

These interviews were undertaken by two other masters' students under the direction of my supervisor, Prof. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, and transcribed separately from the cohorts I interviewed. I had access to the completed transcripts, and used the data collected from these interviews to supplement my own, original material. It is important to note that to date, this raw data has not been analyzed elsewhere. I acknowledge these borrowing, but reiterate that the instrument was drawn up by myself (under supervision), and that the two primary cohort studies in my dissertation – Humanities, Development and Social Science as well as Management Studies – were interviewed and transcribed by myself. Thus, the researcher was able to compare the data received from these staff of these two faculties as well as examine similarities and differences through the structured interview technique which made it possible not only to analyze the various responses of staff from the two faculties but also to compare the findings implicit in the various responses. Face-to-face structured interview schedules employed in this study were imperative as they allowed the researcher to gain a broader understanding and an insight into the respondents perspectives with regard to issues of changing terms and conditions of employment, issues of governance, the institutional culture of the new institution, the issue of staff retention as well as the overall fear existing at the institution.

Location of Study

Due to the fact the study is based on the responses from staff at UKZN, the location concentrated on two campuses; Howard College campus and Westville campus. Further interviews were also undertaken on the Pietermaritzburg campus (see below). Because both of the faculties under investigation had moved campuses and I had to travel between these two to conduct my research with staff. Potential respondents personally approached participants from both sites from UKZN and asked them if they would like to participate in the study. Some refused to be part of this study. In response to my query as to why they would not participate, some would-be respondents said that they were afraid of participating because academic freedom was compromised at the

new institution, or that they feared losing their jobs. Contrastingly, many of the staff were eager to participate in the study as they perceived this study as an opportunity and platform to express their pent-up frustrations and their likes and dislikes about the new institution.

Appointments were made with the willing participants as to the times that they would be available for an interview. All interviews took place at their offices and the duration of the interview ranged approximately from 45 minutes to an hour depending on how much information was given by the respondents. Based on the fact that the study aimed at attaining rich qualitative data the researcher conducted and recorded all interviews. Overall it took a period of six weeks to collect the data required for the study as all of my participants had other tasks and commitments to fulfill as part of their duties and responsibilities. For example some academic staff were involved in fieldwork, supervision of masters and Ph.D students, while others made appointments with the researcher at 8am because they were either busy during the day or busy conducting lectures. The data gathered from the respondents was frank, and respondents unexpectedly were open and honest about their perceptions of the university, both prior to and after the merger.

In undertaking research, ethical considerations play an important role. In all cases informants participated voluntarily and they were ensured that their identity will remain anonymous. All the informants in this research were shown the ethical clearance form thereby ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Due to the sensitivity of my research topic, anonymity and confidentiality had to be maintained because it allowed for the protection of the respondents' identities. It must be noted that many respondents chose not to invoke anonymity, but wanted the researcher to report the findings with their own name, however, the researcher chose not to do this in order to maintain the integrity of the findings.

Population of the study and sample selection

Purposive sampling, also called judgmental sampling, was chosen as the relevant technique for the study since it allowed me as the researcher to use my own discretion as to who was in the best position to be knowledgeable about the subject under investigation. Picianno (2004) defined judgmental sampling technique as one “where a researcher uses his/her own judgment to select a population that reflects an important aspect of the research. It is obtained according to the discretion of someone who is familiar with the relevant characteristics of the population.” The advantage of using a judgmental sampling technique can prove to be useful “when you want to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which a little is known” (Kumar, 1999: 162).

An example of how judgmental sampling aided me in the collection of data, both overtly and covertly, is worth recounting here. While being present at the Westville campus at the Faculty of Management Studies for an interview I observed many staff members walking out of a meeting with facial expressions revealing anger and frustration. One of my participants was also present in that meeting so I waited in the corridor, and during the interview with the interviewee, my respondent mentioned that they just had a meeting with the Head of School and things don’t look good in their department. Had I not chosen to interview high ranking members of faculty, I would have not been privileged to this information.

Respondents to be interviewed				
Faculties	Professional Staff		Support Staff	Total
	Head of School	Academics	Administration	
Humanities, Development, Social Sciences	1	8	2	11
Management Studies	1	8	2	11
Science	1	8	2	11

Library Administration	Head of Department on each campus (3)		3 librarians each from Westville & PMB; 2 from HC	11
Total	6	24	14	44

Table 4.1 Categories of respondents in sample population

A sample size of twenty-two respondents in the first instance was selected. Persons identified as interviewees for the inquiry included a Head of School from the Faculty of Management Studies and a Head of School from the Faculty of HDSS; four each former Howard College and Westville campus academic staff from the faculty of Humanities; four each former Howard college and UDW academic staff from the Faculty of Management Studies; and two administrative staff from these two faculties. The reason for interviewing administrative staff is that they were also affected by the merger process.

Ethical Clearance

As part of the preparation for this study, ethical clearance was sought from the University's Research Office (see Appendix Two). Issues of informed consent; clearance of the research instrument; the anonymity of sources together with the undertaking not to use recognizable names or positions; and the University requirement to retain the raw research data for a period of not less than five years, were covered in the ethical clearance application. This application was scrutinized at the level of the School Higher Degree Committee as well as that of the Faculty Higher Degree Committee before being forwarded to the Research Office for the issuance of an Ethical Clearance Number HDSS/0330714.

Sample Demographics

The following are the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the cohorts of the Faculties of Humanities and Management Studies.

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Occupation	Frequency	Valid Percent
Academic Staff Teaching	16	72.7
Administrative staff	4	18.2
Head of school	2	9.1
Age group		
26-35	4	18.2
36-45	3	13.6
46-55	11	50.0
above 56 years	3	13.6
under 25	1	4.5
Gender		
Female	10	45.5
Male	12	54.5
Race		
African	4	18.2
Coloured	1	4.5
Indian	10	45.5
White	7	31.8
Total	22	100.0

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the sample used in the study.

The above table indicates that of the 22 respondents that I interviewed, the majority (73%) were academic staff, 18% administrative staff and 9% heads of school. Half of the respondents were in the age group 46-55 years (50%), followed by those who were 26-35 years (18%), and those who were 36-45 (14%) years and above 56 years (14%). The minority were those aged under 25 years (5%). In terms of gender, 54% of the respondents were male compared to 46% who were female, while the majority were Indian (46%) followed by Whites(32%), followed by African(18.2%) and lastly by 'Coloured' people.(4.5%).

Content and thematic analysis

Content Analysis was utilized in the process of transcription. Content Analysis is defined as “an approach to the analysis of documents and texts (which may be printed or visual) that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner” (Bryman, 2004:181). This allowed me as a researcher to elicit relevant themes from my findings to understand Staff responses to the merger at UKZN.

Coding and analysis

Being a qualitative study, the data was transcribed into a verbatim transcript. I was personally responsible for the transcription of the Faculty of HDSS and the Faculty of Management Studies. The two other cohorts were transcribed separately. Following transcription, the scripts were analyzed through the utilization of NVivo version 8 software®. This software organized the raw data, that is, the scripts, so that it was possible to link and compare thematic issues within and across documents. The data was then coded by labeling similar aspects and sorting the information into distinctive categories. A list of 'starter nodes' was generated from an initial entry in a project journal in the software where the questions and assumptions brought to the report were outlined. The software gave results that allowed deeper exploration and manipulation of the qualitative data that might not be possible with traditional coding.

Two distinct types of coding were used in the analysis. The first was descriptive coding, which described the cases in the study. This process related both to the coding of information in categories and the creation of attributes to classify them. The second type was analytical coding. This was done by selecting source content so as to interpret and reflect on the meaning of the data in order to arrive at new ideas and categories. The process entailed gathering material that could be rethought and reviewed given the growing understanding of the inter-relationships of the categories in the data. Topic coding was not undertaken since the study already had relevant topics under the different themes. The original themes had been embedded within the questionnaire (see Appendix One). The themes generated in the analysis were modified to suit the study objectives.

Conclusion

In this chapter the relevant research methodology undertaken for this study has been outlined. The design of the study was indicated were the choice of analytical tools and the use of the purposeful, (judgmental) sampling frame as an integral part of the preferred choice of qualitative methodology. Sampling, ethical considerations and the *modus operandi* of approaching, interviewing and reporting on the interviewees have been examined. The significance of ethical of ethical awareness through offering both confidentiality and anonymity to all respondents was emphasized.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPERATIONAL ISSUES: FINDING AND ANALYSIS

The following two chapters focus on reporting the analysis of data obtained during the course of the study, drawing out findings, and elaborating on them through discussion. Data generated from structured interviews and the questionnaires are analyzed and interpreted against and in comparison with the findings of studies conducted by other researchers within the literature utilized in this research. In these chapters all verbatim quotations from respondents is presented in italics. Individuals are not identified in keeping with the policy of anonymity discussed in a previous chapter and for reasons associated with the ethical considerations already outlined. All quotations are referenced by the cohorts of which they formed part – i.e. ‘Faculty of Management Studies, Westville’; ‘Faculty of HDSS, HC’ (refers to Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, Howard College); ‘Library Admin’ (refers Library Administrators from both the Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses); and ‘Faculty of Science’ (refers to Faculty of Science on both the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses).

The first of the data reporting and analysis chapters covers areas of operational interest pertinent to the staff of the newly merged universities. While many of the themes overlap, the discussion has been clustered in terms of the objectives outlined in Chapter One. Thus, the present chapter will discuss the ways in which the staff have responded to challenges and opportunities posed by the merger; and how former UDW staff and former UND staff members perceive the merger of the two former institutions.

Multiple campuses and geographical factors: Geographical distance

Geographical distance, moving offices and increased travel was a concern for many staff at UKZN. The physical distance between the merging campuses has contributed significantly in the success or failure of the merger. In this study the geographical location has been assessed in terms of the positive and negative effects it has induced.

On the positive side, many academics felt that benefited from the merger by moving campuses. The former UDW academics who moved to Howard College (HC) felt that the merger had a positive effect in their School because they now have better offices; furthermore, HC is suitably located in terms of proximity to the city. This made up for the disruption caused by having to move locations: *“We now do have quite nice offices and people are happy with the move but there was quite a lot of resistance to moving because people were just really tired”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). A lecturer employed at the Pietermaritzburg campus acknowledged that there is a new mentality evident in merged structures: *“[T]here’s more of a drive to create a sense of oneness, there’s always the consideration of what’s happening with regards to your counterparts”* However, although many respondents agreed with this ‘drive’, it is unclear as to whether it is a positive manifestation of new energy or not.

A number of respondents had a more negative response to moving campuses. Some interviewees expressed concern as they live closer to UDW and have to travel a longer distances to Howard encountering greater amount of traffic. A former academic in the Faculty of HDSS said that *“Where it takes me to two minutes to get to UDW now it takes an hour to get to Howard College and it takes me an hour because of traffic, if I’m lucky forty minutes and so with the cost of petrol these days this is not something you can’t take lightly.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

In addition a head of School in the Faculty of HDSS stated that travelling across the two campuses raises costs for all concerned. With committee and other University meetings occurring on different campuses, the academic staff in the Faculty of Management Studies claimed that commuting across both the campus decreased their productivity

and efficiency. On the other hand, another administrator said that due to the operation of the shuttle service, the distance between the campuses was not a problem. In the Faculty of HDSS the geographical location of the merged campuses was not perceived as a problem to both the administrators.

Those who had to teach on both campuses felt that they had to travel more which is costly and they had to move offices, in itself a stressful exercise, and in the process many items got lost. Noted a former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS, *“I have moved three times from my offices in one year and it was very stressful emotionally and physically and in that process a lot of my items got lost. Shelves were broken so it was costly and every time I had to move office we had to call people so obviously cost was high.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Teaching staff from Pietermaritzburg campus were also dismayed: *“I’m not a big fan of the travelling down to Durban [...] we find ourselves having to travel down for just a meeting that takes a hour”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). So cost and travelling time contributed negatively to perceptions of the merger.

Addressing the geographical distance between the two campuses, a former Howard College administrator in the Faculty of Management Studies commented that *“In terms of traveling the distance for me to Westville is further and you do not get compensated for that and it increases my cost. I can’t say that I gained anything from the merger that I didn’t have at Howard College.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). Similar issues were voiced by a former Howard College academic in the Faculty of Humanities, in the School of Social Work, who echoed that *“Traveling across campuses is a problem because sometimes we have to go to Westville campus to pick up a cheque and there is difficulty in finding parking and our efficiency [is compromised since] we are losing our work time. Some things are across campuses and this causes some problems.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS, School of Social Work also expressed identical sentiments with the Management Studies administrator by saying that *“From a personal point of view, I have*

to travel more because I lived closer to UDW. The cost has been more.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). A greater spatial distance exists between the sister-campus of Howard College and Pietermaritzburg; a Chemistry lecturer employed at the latter campus was quoted as saying *“[I] do a lot more traveling to Durban than I used to do, before we merged”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science).

An analysis of the findings revealed that geographical distance between the newly merged campuses raised concern among the academics. The abovementioned lecturer further added that the association between the merged departments of the Pietermaritzburg- and Westville campuses’ Faculty of Science and Agriculture was difficult: *“we’re [...] kilometres apart. It’s actually not easy to keep up that formal contact very well, people don’t meet in the corridors and courses do drift away a little bit”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). Skodvin (1999:75) stated that “geographical proximity plays an important role in regard to the institutions which should be merged. International experiences with mergers have shown that the most successful mergers took place between institutions that were physically not far from each other or in the same place. It was only possible to save on resources and infrastructure in this kind of merger.” As commented by some informants cited above, moving from one campus to the other and frequently changing offices was a hassle.

Quality of students

Informants were asked whether the merger had positively or negatively affected the School or division’s ability to attract high quality students. Responses to these questions indicated that interviewees from all three academic Faculties interviewed, HDSS perceived that the university had failed to attract quality students. The respondents also suggested that the quality at UKZN was being compromised by quantity. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS stated that *“I don’t think that the University as a whole is supporting and admitting high quality students to the institution. I don’t think enough money is given for scholarships particularly for those students wanting to do*

honours.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). The head of School in the Faculty of HDSS also expressed that *“The University doesn’t attract high quality students. We don’t get the best quality students.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

According to some academics in UKZN, the University has become the ‘last resort’ for students compared to some local and international universities. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS commented that *“I think it is a serious problem the university has, if we [are] talking about undergraduate students the fact that, and judging from my own children and their friend, nobody really wants to come to UKZN; their first choices these days are UCT, Stellenbosch, Pretoria or Wits and if they have money their other choices are to go to Europe, America or Australia. Increasingly there are some students going to Asian universities [in] India, Malaysia and even the Middle East. So therefore recruiting undergraduate students [has become] increasingly hard [...] and it’s not just a race thing.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Interviewees thought most postgraduate students do not perceive UKZN as a first choice, but come here because it is the last resort or it is financially more viable for their families. They felt that there is a lot of reluctance in terms of joining UKZN for students leaving School. An administrator from the Faculty of Management Studies added that *“We do get some good students but most of them prefer to go to UCT or WITS”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

The study discovered that the informants attributed poor publicity as a factor for the low attraction of quality students. In response to negative publicity (a factor discussed in Chapter Four of this dissertation) a former HC academic in the Faculty of HDSS commented that *“I think the problems we had in 2006 have created an impression that UKZN is unstable and parents may not want to send their kids, but otherwise it’s okay. There’s also a problem of negative publicity, for example like receiving PhD’s: people are buying degrees and then they are being revoked and this is bad publicity.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). This remark was a direct allusion to the scandals revolving around the deleterious effects of the negative publicity afforded to the

University with the Chippy Shaik and Kanthan Pillay degree scandals, presented briefly in another chapter. Thus, a significant number of academic staff felt that the merger had a negative effect in terms of attracting quality students, also partly due to the negative image that the university receives in the media. It was suggested that if we really want to become a 'premier university of African Scholarship' we need to attract quality students and the only way to attract quality students is to market the programmes.

Attracting quality students, academic and tutoring support.

In response to the question of whether their School or division had been able to attract high quality students since the merger, members of the Faculty of Management Studies expressed the opinion that the lack of financial resources for advertising the master's programmes was one of the main reasons why there were so few South African masters' candidates: *"I've got a class, probably plus-minus fourteen master's students, and out of the fourteen, 75% of the master's students are non-South Africans. The big question is that why we are not able to attract local students into our programme so it's a matter of great concern. I have identified the problem. Our coursework modules are offered during the day and people who have honours degrees and who are qualified they cannot leave their jobs to come and attend lectures. We have received several letters from aspiring and prospective masters' students who want to join the programme and say that they will join if the programme offers the modules after hours. We have made numerous suggestions to management asking for the programmes to be offered after hours. We are not marketing our modules like other universities. We don't have the financial resources to advertise. I have no doubt that if we spend a little more money on advertising our programmes in the media and the newspapers then we will be able to attract high quality students."* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management, Westville).

From the above comment it can be gauged that a further problem identified was that most of the coursework modules are offered during the day, and this acted as a

limitation on the number of students who were prepared to study through this programme.

The number of vacant and unfilled posts also posed a problem for the delivery of academic excellence. This under-employment within the University can be traced directly to the staffing constraints following the merger; the need for ‘matching and placing’, and the financial austerity forced by the increased merger costs. A former Howard College academic in the Faculty of HDSS commented about the Social Policy Programme (SPP): *“How can any service be offered if everything in SPP is in suspension and in limbo. It has four posts and [and only one is filled]. It has cut the number that it is suppose to have. There should be four students per academic at post-graduate level and this makes it very difficult to offer services to students. On paper we look good but I am sure that if we ask students we [are] not.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

In the School of Sociology and Social Science a great concern was about tutoring. A former Howard College lecture from the Faculty of Humanities said that *“We have a cut down on the tutorial budget, so a possibility of cutting down tutors to earn a descent stipend to be able to tutor is heightened.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Disturbingly it became apparent that there has been a decrease in the budget allocated to tutors. It is ought to be noted that tutors play a significant role in facilitating the teaching process and their role needs to be recognized and valued accordingly. The findings also revealed there is a shortage of staff in terms of supervision for post graduate students.

A central issue to attracting students to UKZN is one of reputation. A Pietermaritzburg School of Chemistry lecturer put it down to *“a lot of bad publicity [...] has had an impact on students enrolling on this university; [... the perception of this institution is not very good”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). However, as noted by a Senior Tutor in the Foundation Programme at the same campus, *“I believe the merger has positively, not*

negatively affected [the student intake] [...] we also need to look at the pool of students [...] it's diminishing. [T]here are so many things that are taking away good students" (Transcripts, Faculty of Science).

Research output: opportunities since the merger.

Teaching, learning and research are the core functions of any university and in order to achieve maximum productivity, equilibrium must be reached between these three functions. The study revealed that the merger resulted in enhanced opportunities for staff in some ways, specifically in areas of research, staff interaction and availability of resources. Most noteworthy was the sense that opportunities for increased research outputs were remarked upon by a significant number of respondents. These informants felt that the merger had prompted progression in areas of research and publishing.

The respondents were asked whether the merger had increased or decreased their School or division's efficiency and ability to conduct high quality research and subsequent research outputs. Academic staff members stated that their capacities have been improved through research and publications and that there have been serious effort that has been put in place by the university management for the promotion of staff in improvement of research output since the merger came into existence. They felt that since the merger there has been growth in research activities and outputs, and this is because of the faculty and individual efforts. A former UDW academic staff member from the School of Gender Anthropology and Historical Studies in the faculty of HDSS mentioned that *"It certainly affected my own personal ability as far as academic staff is concerned. Part of that is related to the research reward system which we didn't have quite so much at UDW. Something that has been quite important is that the Research*

structures in the faculty are quite good. Prof Jacobs⁵ had set up a very good office and that continues. Research is one of the good things about this School within the faculty. There has been growth in research and it's really more because of the faculty and its efforts.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Similar views were shared by academic staff in the faculty of Management Studies. All the academic staff respondents highlighted research as a great opportunity in bringing light to the department and enhancing its academic standing and reputation. Increased research also allowed for the collaboration of the staff. One of the former UDW academic staff member in the Faculty of Management Studies opined that *“There has been a lot of effort that has been placed by the university management on the improvement of their research output, so there is a lot of support in that regard.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

In the Faculty of HDSS, staff in the School of Sociology and Social Sciences felt that the merger has promoted an ethos of research and publication within the University, since academics are given incentives for participating in research activities. A former Howard College lecturer said that **The Undressing Durban project-WISA** *has been focused on trying to do research especially with academics that do not have a very strong publication record. People who have been most committed to that are Westville colleagues who tend to be Black and Indian. The WISA project is working very well.”* His reasoning for this increased research activity was related directly to the provision of research incentives. Similarly in the School of Anthropology, Gender and Historical Studies there has been an increased level of research activities. A former UDW academic stated that *“What has been done in anthropology is a tremendous amount of work on Migration and Diaspora, Transnationalism, HIV/AIDS research and those kinds*

⁵ Professor Johan Jacobs was the ex-Deputy Dean with responsibility for Graduate Studies and Research within the Faculty of HDSS. At the time of the interview, he was the Acting Vice-Chancellor for Research across the entire University.

of things. A number of colleagues in the department who communicate internationally have come up with at least three publications over the last two years.”

In the Faculty of Management Studies all academic staff agreed that *“The merger provided staff development research initiatives. Although there have not been much opportunities, there has been lot of effort by our management within the Faculty for research to be promoted and there is a lot of emphasis on assisting academic staff to promote research and create research publications.”*

The enthusiasm of the increased research output was qualified by a head of School in the faculty of HDSS who claimed that *“I think for a long time the merger took up a lot of people’s time so people are still efficient and producing research and the people who were not doing it before the merger are still not doing it. But there is some initiative in our School to encourage [staff] to write and publish. The output is quite in-house.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). This view was shared by other respondents who expressed the belief that the merger has not increased their ability to conduct research.

The optimism expressed by these respondents was not universally shared. The *Mail Guardian* reported that “many merging institutions experienced a drop in their research output, leaving them at a distinct disadvantage to the so-called untouchables (such as WITS (University of the Witwatersrand) and UCT (University of Cape Town)) (Rolf Stumpf *Mail and Guardian*, 14.10.2009). Some of the reasons given for the pressure on research output cited by the respondents in this study included increased teaching and administrative workloads and fewer strategically placed resources.

The massive workloads, discussed in more detail later in this chapter, were perceived as preventing staff from participating in research and served as a barrier that affects the ability to contribute to quality research. A former UDW academic from Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the faculty of HDSS said that *“This is difficult because research at*

universities tends to be highly individualized and you [are] only as good as the amount of time allows you to be, with the amount of resources that you have. I don't think it's a question of the individual's ability to do high quality research. I think it's a question of how much resources are available, and just not ploughing in resources, but how you put appropriate resources in a particular project that tends to engage in high quality research. Frankly, the university hasn't provided me with very much in the way of resources. What resources are used for my research comes from my own research funds and continues to come from collaboration of people outside the university." This informant seems to have missed the point that his/her 'own research funds' are paid from university coffers, although they are allocated on a merit system devised according to the research output he/she achieved in the previous academic year. Thus, since there is a direct correlation between output and allocation of resources, these 'productivity unit' resources are seen as internal to the academic, rather than coming from the university funds. External resources for Social Sciences aside, an academic from the Pietermaritzburg School of Chemistry noted that the UDW campus was not *"a suitable place for high quality research, we need proper laboratories built, we need decent equipment to be put in place"* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science).

All the academic staff in the Faculty of Management Studies claimed that due to the heavy workload, the amount of time spent doing research had decreased. *"[R]esearch, it's something that everybody wants to be engaged on, but if you don't have time it's quite difficult"* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). Due to the merger, the increase in bureaucracy (more colleagues to liaise with, more paperwork to be written up/managed) has decreased the amount of time available to staff: *"there seems to be more of a paperwork kind of ethos – there's a trail, there's a longer trail for paperwork than previously"* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). The two heads of Schools in the Faculty of Management Studies and HDSS also indicated that due to heavy workloads research output was affected. It is perceived that research at UKZN tended to be highly individualized and it is not a question of an individual's ability to conduct research, but the availability of time and available resources to do so, which is perceived to be biased

towards certain individuals. The massive workloads were described by staff interviewed as a barrier that negatively affects their ability to contribute to quality research. This situation is not confined to UKZN: Tettey's study on staff retention in African universities referred in earlier chapters, noted that at the University of Ghana "staff were compelled by their heads of departments to be in their offices throughout the day even when they are not teaching and this makes it difficult for them to pursue their research which requires being in the field". (Tettey, 2006:29).

The administrative load, referred to here as 'paperwork', is compounded by heavy expectations of community outreach in some disciplines such as Community Development, Social Work, Psychology and many of the Health Sciences. In all these disciplines, practicums and internships are a required part of student preparation, and entail a lot of work on the part of the lecturer to organize and monitor. Again, Tettey is instructive here. In his study he found that "at [the] UKZN Medical School over 81% respondents [said] that their job requires a lot of service work with little time for research" (Tettey, 2006:29).

The merger – it appears – has not delivered on greater opportunities for staff/student employees. Senior employees of the Pietermaritzburg campus, a library administrator and lecturer, when asked about opportunities both commented that "*actually none come to mind*" (Transcripts, Library Administration, Pietermaritzburg Campus; (Transcripts, Faculty of Science).). A Westville campus administrator did indicate YES when asked but did not elaborate on what forms these opportunities take (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). Later in the interview, the same respondent commented that "*most of the opportunities [...] we enjoyed before the merger, we are still enjoying now*" (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). The reality of opportunities is thus placed in doubt.

Teaching and Learning

Some informants, though not all, felt that the merged institution has prompted the provision of necessary resources for teaching, learning and research. A former UDW

Social Work academic commented that “*Resources have improved in terms of access to computers and telephones because at UDW we were restricted with the use of telephones*” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Other departments noted that they benefited in terms of the new equipment such as computers.

Although these narratives are telling, many respondents note improvements regards the resource base. Another Westville library officer indicated that the resource base was “*not so bad*”. (Transcripts, Library Administration, Westville Campus). A Westville administrator (356) was more adamant saying “it’s improved. It’s improved”, and later said that he/she believed that the budget increased for the campuses in general, though the Westville library staff was inadequate (Transcripts, Library Administration, Westville Campus).

Apart from facilitating the provision of new equipment to some of the departments, the increased emphasis on research had the collateral effect of encouraging staff integration in the Faculty of HDSS. Informants applauded the merger for promoting interaction of staff from different race groups and encouraging them to work together in a friendly way. Therefore increased levels of research and interaction has allowed for heightened collegiality. However a minority of academics, especially in the Faculty of Management Studies, felt that the merger has provided nothing with regard to core functions. Both the administrators in the Faculty of Management Studies interviewed were clueless about whether the merger had increased research or not. In contrast both the administrators in the Faculty of HDSS said that there has been an increase in research and publishing since the merger.

The *GAFC Report 2009* applauded the expansion of research and teaching opportunities, stating that “the findings based on the submissions received; there is no evidence of a threat to the right to teach, learn and research at UKZN. This perception has filtered through to the general public, and bodes well for the merged University (Baqwa, 2009). As a leading newspaper commented:

It is particularly pleasing to note that both UKZN and UNISA have achieved significant improvements in research productivity in the past three years, with UKZN recording an increase of almost 80% in the number of publications recognized for subsidy purposes. This could in part be attributed to the merger, which brought a greater focus to research performance and also improved the critical mass of active researchers within the institution. (*Mail and Guardian* 14.10.2009)

These positive responses were not conclusive, as some departments experienced increased bureaucracy and thus, more paperwork and administration delays *resource allocation: a Pietermaritzburg School of Chemistry academic notes that “especially from our perspective, you know, we need to buy chemicals, we need to buy gas [...] because of the merger and having to merge two previously independent running organizations into one, it has made that more difficult for us. And that in itself has been stressful”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science). A senior library officer at Westville campus agrees, but from a different perspective; *“our most valuable resource, which is information and the movement of that information, somewhere along the line [...] is lost”* (Transcripts, Library Administration, Pietermaritzburg Campus).

Resources: Improvement in the working environment

With regards to the working environment, the staff held different opinions. Some remarked that the working environment was adequate and conducive to productivity. Some staff members felt that the working environment had improved under the merger since a pool of academics had been brought together and there is tremendous exchange of ideas. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS, in relation to the exchange of ideas, noted that *“It’s improved to the extent that new and fresh ideas have been brought together by the merger.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). This was echoed by an administrator, who also moved from Westville to Howard College: *“My*

working environment has improved, sometimes change is good." (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

A Westville library officer concurs (Transcripts, Library Administration, Westville Campus), but an administrator on the same campus feels *"my working environment is the same"* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Contradictorily, a currently-employed Westville librarian admits that the working environment has not improved; post-merger, *"we have been asking for enclosure in our workstations here since four years back, we have been singing the same tune, but up to now nothing has been done"* (Transcripts, Library Administration, Westville Campus).

Access to resources are vital to providing services and ensuring a quality functioning of an institution. However, the allocation, or strategic use of resources is even more important. Importantly, a deputy-director of Pietermaritzburg Library Administration noted that prior to the merger *"there was no equal distribution of resources, so today there is no one who has got their own thing, it is one budget running by one institution"* (Transcripts, Library Administration, Howard College). One of the former UDW interviewees also cited adequate office space as important benefit of the merger for them (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Resources: Still some way to go?

Despite the positive responses noted above, from the questionnaires it is apparent that the majority of the members of staff felt that the resource base has deteriorated. One of the respondents commented that the resource base for research has not improved, since there is lack of funding for research and as a result academics have to source funds from external organizations, or secure funds through publications. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS voiced out that *"I don't ask the university for money in fact I don't even ask them for money to attend a conference, all of that is generated either through my money or I get invited through various organizations. So in fact the*

university resources for attending conferences, doing research is through my own money.”

All the respondents interviewed in the Faculty of Management Studies, including the Head School interviewed, said that accesses to resources have deteriorated. In addition to that an interviewee in the Faculty of HDSS cited that *“We have to move around to borrow paper for photocopying because the budgets run out. We had to cut back on a number of field trips.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Out of all the respondents from the Faculty of Management Studies, only one the former UDW academic staff said that their working environment was stable, or at least marginal. In contrast to that, former HC academic staff member in the same Faculty were of the opinion that the facilities are not up to standard and need upgrading. Thus the majority of staff members interviewed were less than satisfied with the resources they had at their disposal. They mentioned that unfavourable conditions were caused partly by shortage of staff leading to heavy workloads, which further de-motivated the staff. This aspect will be discussed in more detail below. They also cited intimidation; threats to be taken to court, causing fear among staff, leading to an unpleasant working environment. The subject of the ethos of the University will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Adequate availability of resources is a prerequisite to the prolific output of the staff. Tettey's study (2006) entitled *Academic Staff Retention in African Universities* revealed that at the University of Ghana and Ibadan there was a low level of access to resources such as telephones, personal computers and building maintenance. In turn, the success of an institution rests heavily on the maximum productivity of its staff. Thus one might then argue that the increased access of resources plays a significant role in improving the services offered by an institution.

Workload and shortage of staff

Most of the staff interviewed saw themselves as hard working, challenged by the large numbers of students, and heavy workloads which meant very little time for research. When asked, the majority of staff were of the opinion that the ideal norm in the division of labour would be to spend 40% of their time on research, and divide the remaining 60% between teaching and administration. However, due to the heavy workload in teaching, there was insufficient time to conduct research and publish. A former HC lecture in the Faculty of Management Studies said that *“In a school that is this big, shortage of staff and workload becomes a lot and it impacts on what extent you can be involved in research. We are not given enough time to do research. The incentive system is very nice but I just don’t think that the kind of stress and strains that we undergo does not give us time to be involved in research.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). Similar sentiments were echoed by a former Westville academic in the Faculty of Management Studies who indicated that *“We are short of staff and have employed many part time staff to help with supervising of post graduate students.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). A former HC academic in the Faculty of Management Studies pointed out that *“90% of our time we are doing administrative work, 1% research and 8% teaching.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). Similarly a former Westville lecture from the School of Cultural, Heritage and Tourism (CHT) in the Faculty of Humanities also said that *“There is no sense of ‘Harvard’ research that fits in with the vision of the university, and at least no attempt is being made to make that possible. What you are doing doesn’t seem to fit into what the university projects as its image, and there is no substance. How can we talk about being a ‘Premier University of African Scholarship. You cannot be a Premier university if you spend 70% or 80% of your time teaching or you spend enormous amount of time doing administrative work.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Both the administrators in the Faculty of Management Studies and HDSS commented that there was heavy workload and shortage of staff in their faculty. The Head of School from the Faculty of Management Studies pointed to the paradoxical situation of having

more financial resources for research, while at the same time, having insufficient time as a result of increased workloads. These loads, in turn, were the consequence of reduced staffing levels while student numbers increased. The net result was contradictory: *“To find time to do research is very difficult. I find it’s made it more complicated in every respect. As an individual staff member [the merger] has created bigger opportunities in terms of the rewards because we have a larger budget and we got a bigger say in the university affairs than we use to.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

Conclusion

The contradiction illustrated in this chapter is that despite the increased rewards and the institutional value placed on research, the time constraints imposed by heavier teaching loads than in the past has meant that less time and energy are available to take advantage of the new incentives.

The findings revealed that there is shortage of staff which is accompanied by use increased workload and limited engagement in research and publishing. Teaching, learning and research are the core functions of any university and in order to achieve maximum productivity, equilibrium must be reached between these three functions. This concurs with studies from other Universities, particularly those in Africa. Tettey’s (2006:31) study noted that the Ethiopian University (Addis Abba) in particular, the “shortage of experienced and qualified professionals who could serve as research advisors, result[ed] in some instructors supervising the M.Sc. thesis research work of large number of students” (Belay cited in Tettey 2006:32). The consequence of this was that the informants in this study felt they prevented from engaging in research and publishing. The same study revealed that

the computer science department at UKZN had to cut down on the number of courses that are taught, as a way of addressing staff work overload. Staff

members acknowledged, however, that this affects the quality of their academic program [sic].

Tettey's study showed that the increased workloads had the capacity to drive people into a state of depression. He recorded that some participants at the Makerere University in Uganda attributed the death of some staff to the work related stress, where again, the informants commented that teaching and administrative work affects research work such that they hardly published or attended conferences.

Findings from the present study revealed that there was an acknowledged positive side to increased research and research output, helped by the new incentives introduced by university's management. However these positive trends and patterns have been burdened by the well-recorded increases teaching and administrative heavy loads for academics and researchers. On the other hand, simultaneous processes mitigated against more productive output. A number of different aspects were attributed to the current ability and inability to deliver services within the context and realities of the new university. Factors that contribute to the impartial functioning of service delivery range from budget allocations and lack of resources. From the response given by both administrative staff in HDSS and Management studies, both the faculties experienced difficulties in efficient and effective service delivery. It is of necessity for any institution to obtain resources, equipment and have satisfactory budget allocations which are transparent. This allows an institution to operate in smoothly and coherent manner. While not all of these factors can be directly attributed to the merger, the translocation of certain disciplines and Schools, as well as the increased numbers of students required to maintain the economic viability of the new University, has meant that on the ground both academic and support staff are of the opinion that the physical infrastructural resources, such as venues and equipment, as well as the human personnel, are stretched to a point where efficiency is no longer possible.

In the present chapter, the research data relating to operational issues was presented and discussed. In the following chapter, I will report on data relating to the broader issues of ethos, camaraderie and governance within the University.

CHAPTER FIVE

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE, COLLEGIALITY

AND GOVERNANCE

Understanding of Institutional Culture

It has been stated that culture is a critical issue that needs to be focused on during the management of a merger (Naidoo 2005). However, Hall et al (2004:140) claim that the

process of establishing institutional culture and identity requires conscious attempts to plan, implement and monitor institutional development, whereby new managements should exercise their accountability in this respect by engaging the view points of all stakeholders, and requesting advice from institutional fora, as well as evaluating decisions in terms of their likely impacts on institutional culture.

In the context of the present research the respondents were asked for their understanding of institutional culture, to which they provided a broad definition. One person defined it as a *“broad dimension [...] that reflects upon common goals, common interests in terms of certain ethical and moral standards of staff members, as well as intellectual responsibilities, the practices of how to go about fulfilling the various mandates of the university. [Institutional culture covers] everything pertaining to the life of the institution, and the rules and the structure of management of the institution as well as work ethics”*.

A senior Westville Campus librarian, employed prior to-, during- and after the merger responded that *“institutional culture is about behaviour, behavioural issues, actions... if you're looking at institutional culture, it is very diversified, there is no running away from*

that fact” (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). Supporting this view, an administrator – employed at the same campus in 2005 – believed *“it’s the way the institution behaves, or ... the behaviour of the institution”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). To a Pietermaritzburg Campus lecturer it meant *“the way the people within the institution behave and a build up of traditions and expectations of behaviour as well”* Transcripts, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg.)

Other respondents viewed institutional culture as an environment that fosters freedom of thought, expression and camaraderie, as well as a great amount of support structures in place. This would entail different pillars of research, community development and teaching that are important in contributing to a fulfillment the university’s vision and mission. Some respondents, especially from Management Studies, viewed institutional culture it as conflict resolution, or norms synonymous with of the university as practiced or understood both by staff and students. One person noted one person: *“It has to do with ethics that guide activities within the university, as well as interaction among staff as well as among students”*.

In contrast, administrative staff from both schools provided a very narrow definition of institutional culture; they described it *“As [a] relationship between staff and the executive committee, and ‘norms and values’ of the university”*.

Both heads of school agreed on their definition, that *“Institutional culture was the way things are done in an institution and the expected norms and value systems”*. However, they differed in their perceptions with regard to the current institutional culture at UKZN. The Head of School of in the Faculty of HDSS felt that *“Now days there is no transparency in the university. [...] Women are still marginalized despite some being in senior positions”*. This respondent opined that *“the Indian race dominates the university and has a network of power that operates [throughout the university]”*.

Further to that the administrator in the Faculty of HDSS claimed that the institutional culture at Howard College (where he was previously) was more open and inclusive. *“I*

found that at Howard College I was able to make more decisions on my own and given more leeway and it wasn't autocratic per se. It was more democratic in the faculty I worked in." Similar views were echoed by the administrator in the Faculty of Management Studies claiming that at former Howard College *"The culture was a much more open [in] approach. There was a much more open relationship and a much more open door policy."* The similarity between the viewpoints of the two administrators, both from different faculties, is striking: both had previously worked at Howard College, and both felt that the pre-merged institution of the University of Natal had been more democratic than the present University.

The study revealed that respondents were of that opinion that the culture of the former UDW was very volatile because it was steeped in the history of the struggle against apartheid and had a strong culture of protest. One Westville Campus librarian responded that *"because of the diversity of the cultures, there (were) bound to be [...] conflict going on"* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville).

Nevertheless, due to the relatively small size of UDW there were high levels of collegiality; there were easy access to people who held authority and there was staff co-operation in times of crises. On the other hand the previous culture of UN encouraged scholarly rigor, as well as competitiveness in terms of higher levels of research activities and performances.

In terms of UKZN, the merging of cultures between a historically black and a historically white institution brought about many anticipated difficulties were envisaged and expected during the process of the merger and negotiations between the prospective partners. In a study that encompassed both these institutions it was discovered that Institutional culture was perceived as certain values that guide the activities, the operations and the conduct as well as certain ethos that actually promoted the values and principles aspired to. It can be deduced from the present study that institutional culture mostly revolves around value systems in terms of how teaching and research

are conducted and how individuals engage with each other at all levels of collegial and human interaction. In more abstract terms, institutional culture has been recognized as one of the mechanisms that harness interaction between individuals at universities. Peterson (2007) argues that culture clashes are not uncommon during the integration process of two organizations with established routines. He noted that the general comprehension of institutional culture centers on teaching, learning and engaging on research. Harman and Harman (2003) state that “sensitivity to human and cultural factors and effective leadership are of utmost importance in achieving success of the merger process”. According to the respondents in the present study, an ideal institutional culture would emphasize collaboration of academic staff and students and also place high value on effective management of the new institution.

Institutional culture is important in shaping the face of the new university, and can be seen as one of the driving forces behind productivity of both staff and students. Institutional culture plays a pivotal role in bringing together people sharing the same views about the institution. Therefore one can argue that institutional culture consists of broad dimensions and the comprehension of culture varies from individual to individual.

The current institutional culture at UKZN is reflected in the lack of integration between staff and students but also among students. There was a widespread perception among my respondents that students are not being integrated into the life of the University. A former Howard College lecturer in the Faculty of HDSS stated that *“When you look around the campus, there is a lack of interaction and people go around in their own races”*.

The demographics of the University indicate that composition of both the student and the staff is relatively reflective of the racial composition. Statistics show that the composition of students consists of 58% African, Indian 29%, Whites 10%, Coloured

3%⁶. It seems we have a kind of a Rainbow nation of what Desmond Tutu coined the term Rainbow Nation. Institutional culture means celebrating culture and engaging the 'other'. However this is not evident at UKZN due to the lack of integration. It is perceived that we are still living in a country that is dominated by colonial apartheid mindset although it is no longer legal for people to practice racial discrimination.

Staffing

One of the goals of the university is to make UKZN an institution that is very attractive to staff, and yet there seems to be negative changes to the conditions of service amongst employees. This is not unique to UKZN, but appears to be a challenge for many South African universities in similar situations. The *Mail and Guardian* (Molapo Qhobela 14.10.2009) reported that “merging institutions such as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University tried their utmost to avoid the wholesale retrenchment of staff. Staff reduction was managed mainly through staff attrition [and] voluntary exit strategies including early retirement options”. In terms of staff retention, all participants identified in this enquiry in HDSS and Management Studies indicated that the university has lost a large number of staff since the merger due to poor staff retention policies. There has been constant loss of staff to other areas of industry or other tertiary institutions for that matter. An academic staff member in the faculty of HDSS said “*staff are trying to find better jobs out there in industry*”. Similar views were shared by another academic in the Faculty of Management studies who echoed that “*Because of the politics of the university many staff are seeking better opportunities outside the university*. A former Howard College academic in the Faculty of Management Studies mentioned that *staff are leaving because of the lack of recognition and low levels of job satisfaction*. This participant further said that “*We are losing skills day by day. We have the AIDS pandemic and this has had a major impact on the skills level in an organization*”. The inability of the

⁶ <http://www.dmi.ukzn.ac.za>

university to retain human capital was perceived to be an effect of existing low staff morale. An academic in the Faculty of HDSS said that *“staff morale is very low as many staff want to leave the institution because of poor salaries”*.

A Pietermaritzburg lecturer commented that the merger did have an effect on staff; *“I think we’ve lost some good people because of it [...] it’s a difficult thing, because people have had to make adjustments as far as staying [...] they had this placement thing and then you might be moved, that kind of thing [...] I just know I see a lot of adverts from the University of KZN in the newspapers”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg). It seems that this is not conclusive; a Senior Pietermaritzburg Tutor says that it’s hard to know, because people will never tell you that, *I am resigning because of the merger*” (Transcripts, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg).

From the summary of my findings it was perceived that the inability of the university to retain staff was due to the following reasons:

- Most academic staff are trying as much as possible to get jobs elsewhere although those who have families in Durban might not find it easy if they have to relocate
- There is a low degree of job satisfaction amongst staff not only because of the merger but also because of the policies of UKZN. A large number of staff members are on 6 months contract/s which is/are renewable and they are not certain of their future (such a situation is directly related to present and future job security).
- Generally the university is losing skills, but this is not a unique situation at this institution alone. It is evident throughout South Africa as is the case with as people are leaving their jobs for greener pastures. The situation is made worse due to the AIDS pandemic where some skills are lost due to death, and it is difficult and costly to recruit new people to fill such vacancies in a short period of time.

- Due to low salary structures and low morale as well as lack of incentives to those who positively contribute to the university, staff retention is almost unsustainable
- There is affirmative action that has impacted very negatively upon the morale of staff members who are non African. They cite an example where Indian and white members of staff were qualified for certain positions but were not appointed because they were given to black people, who did not meet the specific job requirements.

An important aspect of the purposes of mergers across the country was to create institutions that would be viable and efficiently run. It seemed appropriate, then, to gauge whether respondents were of the opinion that this aim had been fulfilled or not. The unit of analysis chosen in the questionnaire was that of the School, since this has been used as a planning and resource unit within the University. Questioned on the matter of the Schools' efficiency and service delivery, the respondents held diverse views. In certain instances, improvements in service delivery were remarked upon. A former Howard College staff member in the Faculty of HDSS stated that *"For the first time in principle we have the resources to do a good job. We have more equipment than we had before"*. In contrast, an academic staff member in the Faculty of Management Studies vehemently argued that *"The problem is that our School is very big and efficiency gets compromised because of the large number of students that we deal with. This view was shared with the head of School in the Faculty of Management Studies, who said that "Initially the merger created a lot of inefficiencies because there were no structures in place. There was a lot of muddling through [the] different cultures that merged. In time the efficiency has increased and I would say that the trajectory is [towards solving problems] that still create inefficiency developments."* Expanding on the problems the School still faced, he cited the large number of students in the School, thus reinforcing the views of the previous respondent: *"I would say number size is more difficult but again it's a real question of managing. We are still getting systems in place."* The recurring theme of large student numbers is addressed below in more detail.

The administrative staff in the faculty of Management Studies felt that there was a decrease in efficiency. The administrator stated that *“Our efficiency has decreased. We are one of the largest Schools and we run on all three campuses and even though we moved to Westville, when it comes to budget allocations we are always under budget. If you compare the number of students and the number of graduates we push out every year to the funds we get it, is not sufficient. We don’t have resources available to deliver services, like equipment, lecture venues and facilities are not up to date. When I was at Howard College the delivery of services was much better because we were a smaller unit.”*

Similar views were shared by the administrator in HDSS. The administrator stated that

“It has decreased our efficiency to deliver services because we do not have the capacity of staff. Our clients have increased, programmes have been introduced and no consideration has been taken into account of the possibility of individuals which have to be responsible for looking after the number of students.”

Conditions of work

Academics felt that the present conditions at work were unfavourable for them and staff in general, and cited the teaching environment as not being ‘very collegial’, low salaries for academic staff, and little existing benefits. A former Westville academic staff in the Faculty of Management Studies expressed that *“The University does not pay attention to its academic staff. The staff is marginalized and [are] treated as if they are idiots and their work is not recognized.”* Another former UDW academic in the Faculty of Management Studies also said that *“for more and more hard work, for more and more stressful teaching it’s difficult to see what the merger has provided. People are grossly overworked in terms of the teaching process”*. As this respondent was relating this in the interview, he became very agitated, indicating the depth of feeling with which these ideas were expressed. Sharing almost identical views concerning the quality of the working conditions, the Head of School in the Faculty of Management Studies said that

“The limitations are resources. In a nutshell the merger has cost more than it anticipated [although] it is seen as a means of reducing costs. [Instead of]making more efficient university structures, in fact demands have been great on finding financial resources. We are in a struggling environment compared to international situation. My office is big, this is the only office [of this] size in this building and I’m fortunate having it. Offices are being improved gradually but are still not up to international standards. The kinds of equipment we are using are relatively old computers compared to what I believe [we should have].”

Working conditions is another issue affecting the staff morale in the wake of the merger. Academic staff from both campuses felt that the working conditions at the university are not conducive to a productive environment, citing lack of resources for teaching and tutoring rooms, computers as well as parking space as examples. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of Management Studies said that *“Tutorial venues are not conducive to facilitate tutorials. When I come from Westville to Howard College I find it’s so difficult to find parking.”* All academic staff felt working conditions had deteriorated, especially those from HC who had moved offices to Westville. They explained that due to financial limitations, staff were ordered to cut back on all services, including photocopying. The stress of working under difficult conditions was exacerbated by a generalized feeling of staff who felt as if they received no sense of recognition from the university despite having worked at the institution for a long time. High levels of stress are not only experienced at UKZN but also occur internationally. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, staff at the Australian universities in which research on mergers was undertaken experienced high levels of stress and low levels of job satisfaction. Hence work-related stress seems to be a common international phenomenon and not found only at UKZN.

Dissatisfaction with the conditions of service and with the running university was run were cited as one of the main reasons for staff leaving the university. A former UDW academic said that *“my conditions of service have deteriorated and have been eroded”*.

It is widely accepted that a healthy working environment is always therefore conducive to the effective functioning of human resources and heightened staff output. It also plays a vital role in cementing collegial bonds among staff at an institution. Salaries are a key factor in retaining academic staff in such entities. A former UDW academic from the Faculty of HDSS, concerning salaries commented in regard to salaries that *“Researchers and academics at this university don’t get comparable salaries with other African counterpart universities and with universities in other parts of the world and that’s a serious problem”*. The administrative staff felt that their workload had increased but salaries had remained the same. One of the two administrative staff from the Faculty of Management Studies voiced a concern in relation to undesirable salaries by the stating that *“I’m still on the same grade. It didn’t change. But I’m supposed to do more. I’m doing more and earning less. My workload increased and my salary decreased.”* The other administrative staff added by noting that

“They are trying to normalize salaries because apparently [...] for the same position [you received more money] if you were at UDW. Salaries were higher at UDW than Howard College for the same grade and they were trying to bring that up to standard but I cannot say whether it has happened.”

Tettey’s study (2006:3) indicates that “dissatisfaction with salaries is a factor undermining the commitment of academics to their institutions and careers, and consequently [to] their decision or intention to leave”. The push and pull factors can be used to illustrate the importance of salaries. If salaries are favourable, the staff tends to be pulled into remaining in the institution; in contrast, if salaries are undesirable, the staff is pushed to greener pastures. The situation at UKZN as expressed by the respondents indicates that there is strong dissatisfaction amongst staff at the institution regarding the issue and it is obvious that such feelings could have negative effects on job performance, zest and enthusiasm.

Racial composition and equity

A generally held consideration among the informants of this study was that the merger has created some cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as moving towards gender and race equity. This is in part because the vast majority of people from the former Westville are black and Indian, while those from Howard College were predominantly white. My interviewees perceived white people as constituting the second lowest amongst four racial categories, with more blacks, followed by Indians, whites, and coloureds in terms of the new university's staff composition. Ironically, this perception is not entirely correct, as the actual figures indicate that in terms of the staff ratio African 34%, Zulu 12% ,Indians 27%, Whites 23%, and coloureds 3%⁷. A number of the respondents explained that the university is trying hard to reach equity targets in terms of gender and race as prescribed by the country's legislation and the department of education, but with limited success. With reference to equity, a former UDW academic from the School of Human Resources, in the Faculty of Management Studies stated that *"There is not much equity balance in our university even in Human Resource and even in our department."*

On the other hand the Head of School in the Faculty of Management Studies stated that *"In our School we have a very diverse distribution. In terms of faculty we have one of the most diverse worlds, certainly on this campus at UDW. If you look at the actual numbers in terms of demographics requirements, gender-wise we have a very reasonable balance in terms of ethnic groups. The balance is good. This campus in fact I would say in terms of black, white if I include Indians as part of the black structure then we are spot on."* Emphasis on equity as a factor in the employment of new staff was sometimes seen as over-done, since the terms of affirmative action policy targets Indian, 'coloured' and Africans to the exclusion of White employees. Noted one Head of School, *"The institution is very serious about employment equity particularly about race. I'm aware of appointments that don't get made because of the race issue."* A

⁷ <http://www.dmi.ukzn.ac.za>

Pietermaritzburg lecturer of Chemistry's comment is insightful here – “I can't say that I've noticed as far as equity is concerned ... it's always been a priority in this department” (MW11, 105: 5).

In a counter-argument, there was an implicit suggestion that equity sometimes was used to cover for more personal and political agendas. A former Howard College academic in the Faculty of HDSS said that *“There are still inequalities. People at UKZN tend to use equity, gender, race etc to pursue their own interests and agendas. That's problematic because white colleagues tend to abuse it to destroy relationships among black people. They will create an impression that black people are actually in your way and that your very own black counterparts wouldn't want you to grow. In terms of representation, we have a huge shortage in terms of black female and African females and coloureds, including men and women. With this problem of retention we have lost a couple of black African scholars, males and females.”*

In the official research commissioned by the University itself, it has been acknowledged that race and equity constitute a number of challenges at UKZN. The *GAFC Report* (reported that “race, racism and transformation constitutes a major challenge at the university” (Baqwa, 2009:25). Furthermore, the *Senate Report* (2006:14) findings revealed that there is a lack of gender equity in the various departments, naming the Finance Department as an example. Across the country, challenges arise from universities' inability to effectively address racial issues in general; and their inability to equalize the racial and gender composition in the workplace. It is evident from the findings of the present research that the much-talked about transformation that is said to be taking place at UKZN is greatly hindered by racial and gender inequalities which are still evident even in the newly merged institution. A deputy-director of PMB Library Administration states that *“ever since the merge started, I saw most particularly the black academics moving out of the institution, you know, I saw a lot of people going ... as for Pietermaritzburg, you know, my director did a lot in terms of getting things to go the transformation way”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Pietermaritzburg). Regards gender

compositions, a Pietermaritzburg tutor – self-confessedly not involved in structures that makes such decisions - commented that *“now when you go to schools, the ratio is totally different, we’ve got quite a lot of males and few female academic staff. And I’m quite sure that the university is doing all that it can to attract people to those positions, it’s just that you can open doors but if people are not there, there’s nothing that you can do”* (Transcription, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg). It is an undeniable fact that although we are living in a diverse country, racism will continue to persist regardless of any efforts that might be put in to transform an individual’s mentality.

Conditions of service

Almost all institutions have some shortcomings and limitations with regard to effective functioning and service delivery. With regard to the merger, the following limitations were identified in the study. The majority of staff from both campuses had a general dissatisfaction in regard to their working conditions. They indicated that the salaries for academic staff and were low and raised concern that academic staff did not get the treatment they deserve. With the recent economic crisis that the country is going through, satisfactory salary packages are of great necessity to make staff to move onto greener pastures. This issue has been discussed above under the push-pull factors.

Conditions of service are an integral part of one’s enthusiasm in the workplace. Conditions of work are a determining factor of an institution’s ability to attract and retain its human capital. Academic staff in the Faculty of HDSS and Management Studies both shared similar views: they agreed that the conditions of service have deteriorated. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS mentioned that there had been better conditions of service before the merger. The respondent said that *“There has been tremendous confusion about the conditions of service. A number of conditions we had at UDW with regards to leave and the accumulation were much better at that institution [when compared to the present university]. The university has acted very insensitively towards us and it’s something they need to look at more seriously.”* A Westville campus

librarian noted something critical in terms of – particularly cultural – insensitivity. *“You look at religious holidays, you know, Diwali, people don’t feel good because previously they used to get religious holidays, Diwali. Now, this particular institution, you must understand, the majority of staff are Indian. So, previously they had – when you’re coming to the merger you need to take this thing [holiday] but everything is done in terms of ... you can take Leave from your this thing (allotted time of absence), you know. But, you know, people look at Christmas as a religious holiday under the microscope and say, you know what, but you’re unfair, you’re giving us that day as a public holiday ... they also feel like they’re being treated unfairly”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville).

One of the administrators in the Faculty of Management Studies expressed the view that the conditions of service had deteriorated. Similarly, both the administrators in the Faculty of HDSS voiced out that in their view the conditions of service had not improved at all. One of them said that *“My conditions of service have not improved. I’m still on the old medical aid and it’s not the greatest.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Still on the same note, the Heads of School for both the Faculty of HDSS and Management Studies also articulated their concerns with regard to the conditions of service, noting that they have not changed since the merger. Overall the informants indicated that there is no longer an accumulation of benefits which is a sign of deterioration of conditions of service.

Levels of Stress

In addition to more severe conditions of service, the informants reported that there were high levels of stress that they encountered at work. The study revealed that the majority of academic staff felt that they worked under negative, hence stressful conditions. Staff indicated that they were working in a cooperative manner. However, they were stressful due to the current management and ‘internal politics’ of the university, and that frequent meetings in the School also increased this stress. Moreover, the informants expressed

the view stress is related to depression and that a large number of staff members have been affected to such a degree that a number of them are receiving counseling, and others leaving the School. A Pietermaritzburg lecturer mentioned stress amongst staff trying to standardize exam papers, the increased administrative demands and the setting of deadlines across campuses: *“that has been stressful, because at times, you know, that is a stressful time of year [i.e. the exam period], now to have the additional burden of setting up a meeting with colleagues in Durban, making sure that they have theirs ready when yours is ready, those kind of things we do find stressful ... we’ve been forced to work together and that has been the, that in itself has brought a level of stress”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg). A Westville campus administrator, when asked by the interviewer if the merger increased levels of stress, they said *“yes, yes, exactly, yes”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville).

The Senate Report’s (2006) findings reveal that there were strained human relations at UKZN revealing that *“inter-human relations are perceived as strained and often unhappy”*. A former Howard College academic from the School of Industrial, Organisational and Labour Studies (IOLS) in the Faculty of HDSS commented that *“Stress is related to depression. Staff are receiving counseling, others are balding off not necessary in my School. Staff are depressed and other people are taking leave so that they can recover. You got to have a very hard skin to survive. You actually need love from your family that kind of support from genuine friends outside the university. Life is not restricted here.”* An administrator in the Faculty of Management Studies commented that *“It’s much more stressful for me to come here and work [as compared to Howard College]”*. The two Heads of Schools indicated that there were very high levels of stress because of intensified workloads. Many of the respondents reported that as a result of stress and other unfavourable conditions, some people have been leaving the university and seeking better employment opportunities. As a result heavy teaching workloads, shortage of staff and the requirements to conduct research and cat-fights over e-mails were sited as factors causing stress amongst staff at UKZN.

Staff enthusiasm

A considerable number of respondents from both the Faculty of HDSS and Management Studies expressed the view that there was some kind of enthusiasm with regard to the projects and research in which the staff were engaged. It can be said thus that people were enthusiastic because of the incentives associated with research activities and productivity. On the other hand the administrative staff from both the Faculty of HDSS and Management Studies mentioned that they experienced very little enthusiasm in the workplace. One of the factors was – as commented by a Westville Campus Library officer – *“one would sense that you have come with an attitude to Westville and said Your system is inferior, you can’t help people feeling that way if [for] everything, the Howard system is implemented”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). A Westville Librarian made a simple observation amounting to the same, that *“with the staff here in this campus, I think people are de-motivated for the reasons, well, but when you hear people talking they are not happy”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). One administrator in the Faculty of HDSS in particular, cited that *“There’s no enthusiasm because at the end of the day you do not get any rewards, no matter how hard you work.”* Furthermore, all the interviewees from the Faculty of Management Studies stated that there were low levels of enthusiasm. It can be surmised that low levels of enthusiasm may be attributed to the low morale among staff.

Social and Collegial Relationships

In terms of social and collegial relationships, staff members felt that there was deterioration since the merger. They explained that although some of them did not like the idea of the merger they felt vindicated as when it became a reality it benefited some members who had 'hidden agendas', and in so doing victimized them. They felt that social and collegial relationships have deteriorated at UKZN. As an example, one respondent noted that while their School does have weekly seminars, sometimes members fail to attend because they are busy with lecturers or other duties and responsibilities, hence only a few usually attend, leading to the belief that *'there is no real collegial spirit'*, while some *'mind their own business'*. A former Howard College academic staff member from the Faculty of HDSS said that *"There is no collegiality anymore. You can't work with people you can't trust anyone. The culture is very cold. I have been at the former university of Rand Afrikaans and the culture there is amazing. I was impressed by their culture in the way they respect their colleagues and they have cordial relationships. Here it is distressing and depressing."*

A Pietermaritzburg academic noted again the distance as core issue; *"it's a difficult thing because we're so far separated ... it's very difficult to say to people you have to work with, your colleagues on another campus that it takes you an hour to get there ... And we've been forced to have to do so many things to bring a oneness in something that is separated by such a distance"* (Transcripts, Faculty of Science, Pietermaritzburg).

All the academic staff interviewed in the Faculty of Management studies mentioned that their social and collegial relationships have deteriorated since the merger. Nevertheless, they claimed that their Head of School is very sensitive to the needs of employees and that they have a good relationship with him. The Heads of School in the Faculty of HDSS and Management Studies independently said there was no sense of collegiality in their departments.

One factor that strikes this researcher as particularly significant is the on-going sense of division between former UDW and UN staff members. This is clear in the response of a former UDW academic staff in the Faculty of Management Studies who stated that *“When the merger took place we saw that the former Howard College [UN] lecturers from Management Studies as trying to be superior and that they are a bloody lazy lot.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). Both the administrative staff in the Faculty of Management Studies noted similar responses: *“There is still a divide with the ex HC and ex UDW staff. You just have to be civil with each other. I just try to be civil as far as work is concerned”.* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

Experiences regarding the merger that gave rise to the University of Johannesburg did not differ much from UKZN. In a study entitled *‘Academics experience of the pre-merger phase’*, Goldman and Van Tonder (2006:154) found that during the pre-merger phase at University of Johannesburg “subjects specifically mentioned that ex-RAU staff seemed to view merging partners as inferior where as the ex-TWR staff was viewed as snobbish, brash and confrontational.” While the findings of the present research indicated found that there was positive staff interaction, the Senate Report (2006:3) findings revealed that “relationships of trust and social networks broke down in the face of new structures and new practices and new protocol”. This is in distinction to the findings of Goldman and Van Tonder (2006:154) who reported that in the University of Johannesburg “the merger planning phase was also the first time that many individuals were exposed to and started interacting with counterparts from the other merger institutions”. Their study further revealed that interviewed subjects reflected that “generally this initial context seemed to be very collegial, courteous and business like”. Even though there are overriding negative aspect that have been experienced in the merged institution one might argue, using the findings of this enquiry, that there are some positive encounters that have been identified by the academic staff.

Despite the complaints expressed above, the merger also carried with it some positive outcomes. While some relationships seem to have deteriorated in terms of collegiality, this was not uniform. One respondent, a former UDW academic from the School of History, in the faculty of HDSS mentioned that: *“In the School I really value the relationships but I can’t again say that it’s exactly because of the merger. I think it’s just a different kind of combination. People in my own discipline like history [were] very marginalized at Westville and here it’s a major discipline and I think it’s a very good discipline from a personal point of view that has improved. I think now that the School is one place and people are able to talk to each other and see each other on a daily basis there is much more kind of understanding and there is strong social, collegial relationships.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). Staff from both campuses felt that the merger has increased staff interaction and networking. An added advantage was the increase in the number of black members of staff who came from UDW, since the former UN had been predominantly white. A former academic from the School of Industrial Organisational and Labour Studies (IOLS) said that *“As an individual I am happy that I am mingling with people from the former UDW. This has expanded networks and allowed me to build new relationships.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

In the Faculty of Humanities, an academic staff member in the School of Gender Studies said that *“there is much broader engagement in terms of relations in our School. We have so many disciplines that we have a family name. Unlike other people, Gender Studies has always been on the Howard College campus so on a discipline level we did not have to merge. The merger had a minimal effect at technical level and made Gender Studies into a forced marriage with brothers and sisters who you do not share other characteristics, example Internet Studies, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, we are the same family. It was a marriage of convenience, who sleeps with whom and who does what with whom.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Thus, in terms of collegiality and staff interaction, the findings of the present research show very mixed results: while the majority of the respondents seem to feel that there was less collegiality after the merger than there had been in their previous institutions (whether that be UN or UDW), others felt that matters had improved in this respect. The literature, too, is ambivalent on the matter: the UKZN *Senate Report* (2006) indicates a relative breakdown in collegiality; while the study from the University of Johannesburg indicates that in the long run, the merger there contributed to more collegial relationships (Goldman and Van Tonder, 2006).

Participation in decision making

This research enquiry assessed the participation of academic staff in the processes of decision making with regards to the merged institution. The findings reveal that all academic staff interviewed in both the Faculty of Humanities and Management Studies took part in the processes of decision making. The respondents were asked how they took part in decision making of the university, to which the following contributions were made: taking part in the higher degrees committee; sitting on the School board/ participating in the faculty board, and participating in the School research committee. They explained that they did this within their disciplines and Schools. With regard to decision making, they attended all the necessary meetings of the Faculty Board and felt that they contributed positively in terms of functionality, organizationally and so forth. Some respondents indicated that they also sit on the recruitment and selection board of the Employee and Labour relations where they listen to grievances and make recommendations with respect to labour issues. When comparing two responses of both one administrator commented that *“I do play a meaningful role especially with the contract staff and who do we actually employ. As far as funds are concerned I feel very strongly about using funds wisely. I sit on the panel for selection and recruitment for other posts and I feel I make a difference. We had a school review recently and I was a support staff nominee and I feel by representing the support staff sector I play a meaningful role”*. (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

From the responses provided by the four administrators interviewed, it can be surmised that individuals have a role in choosing the amount of decision-making in which they take part. Two of the administrators, one from each of the interviewed faculties, appeared to be interested and proactive in the life of their faculty. An administrator in the Faculty of Management Studies indicated that *“I take part within my School and at the School level, I can have a say as far as financial decisions are taken. One of my duties is to maintain the School cost centre and decide what needs to be purchased but it’s subject to approval from the line manager. The other decision-making [opportunity] is that I’m involved with are the contract staff. Certain decisions that affect them, like what we pay them, although they [are] standardized to their qualifications. When it comes to some decision-making and HR policies within my School, like contract staff where leave is concerned, I make recommendations.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). In the Faculty of Humanities, of the two administrators interviewed, one said that *“On behalf of the university I’m the Commissioner of Oaths and that’s a big responsibility. I also check academic transcripts and assist and give advice to students in their decision making.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). In comparison the two other administrators can be summed up by the following response: *“I do not take part in any decision making.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

From the findings it can be surmised that administrators can play a pivotal role in regard to decision making in their faculties. Positive contribution to the process of decision making by administrators is essential in the successful and coherent functioning of the merged institution. Properly maintained administration ensures growth and sharp responsiveness of the university to the needs of both its staff and students. Administration also plays a pivotal role in attaining effective communication between academic staff and students within and across all campuses.

When interviewing academic staff on the issue of participation, staff from both faculties indicated that they were active and involved in some aspects of decision making. A former Westville academic in the Faculty of HDSS commented that *“I take part in the*

higher degrees committee in my departmental and School decision making processes but more within my discipline and more in the higher degrees committee than the broader School. So I think I am reasonably well involved in those kind of things.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

On the other end of the spectrum, of the four former Howard College academics in the Faculty of Management Studies who were interviewed, two claimed that they were not involved in any decision making processes. One of the remaining respondents said that *“My participation is very limited. I am a member of the higher degrees committee.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). The other academic said that *“I take part in decision making through the School, although it is too minimal to the School board. I don’t feel comfortable in the School meetings because people have their cliques.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). The findings reveal that former Howard College lecturers in the Faculty of Management Studies had limited participation in the processes of decision making. Although it could be perceived that the merger has deprived other academics of the opportunity to have full participation in decision-making, the study has revealed that some of the academic staff actually did participated to some extent.

In any university the Heads of Schools are seen as prominent features in all structures of the institution and they wield authority in all decision that take within the School. In relation to the positions held by Heads of Schools, a former Howard College lecture in the Faculty of Humanities noted that *“The head of School can be a little HITLER because to them decision making may not be accountable. Expenditure is accountable to the executive and the head of School is almost like a Choir master as opposed to a HITLER. But there’s always a danger that the system can turn into a more authoritarian system so you go to the next level and that can be decisive as well as with the Heads of School hopping up and down so although there is principle of decentralization in the merger it has gone hand in hand with absolute centralization so there is a*

decentralization of obligations but not of responsibility." (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). This feature of authoritarianism is taken up later in this chapter.

The coherent functioning of any institutions lies heavily on incorporating all staff in the process of taking decisions which in many ways determine and shape the future of that institution. In addition, allowing the university staff to voice out their opinions concerning particular issues of questions might reduce conflict between the staff and management in the long term.

Barriers perceived to participation

In response to the question of whether they had faced any barriers to their participation in decision making, respondents cited racial differences as one of the important factors. A former UDW academic from the School of Anthropology, Gender and Historical Studies in HDSS noted that *"I have been surrounded by a number of people who are still under the misunderstanding that the whites still rule the roost here and many of the white staff of the university believe that they can still reign supreme and many of them are rather disappointed social climbers. They stifle a lot of initiative [and the] progress of other staff members from other classified racial groups that can make it largely because of their arrogant attitudes."* Similarly one respondent from the Faculty of Management Studies also noted that *"I am very uncomfortable with the way the whites carry on. I have a problem with the white condescending attitude."* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

On the issue of racial difference, the Head of School in HDSS said that *"If I talk particularly about Senate, all they do is fight, so all these power groups spend their time fighting in meetings with each other instead of getting down to [the] business of the university. Watching with amazement I'm beginning to get angry and one day I will wake up and tell them to stop acting like toddlers. There's not much morality and integrity in this place."* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). It is evident from the study that even in this new merged institution race still plays a vital role in staff interaction. One of the

important factors behind the merging of Higher Education Institution's was to address racial differences but it seems as if the racial discrepancies still persist.

The most important vehicle of participation for staff members was seen as attendance at Faculty Board meetings. However, many of the interviewees expressed the view that they were present at fewer of these meetings than for a then they would have wished. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of HDSS said that *"I wish I had more time to attend meetings"*. (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

The time available to attend meetings was seen as an important barrier to fuller and active participation. *"Time, to be able to do this [attend meetings] is just not possible to do all the things they require. The amount of time available especially with heavy teaching load it's a big constrain [to participating in university decision-making]."* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Attendance at meetings was made more difficult by the multi-campus structure of the university. Both faculties whose staff were interviewed are spread over two campuses, and meeting are either convened separately per campus, which breaks up the solidarity of the Faculty. A former UDW academic said that *"attending meetings across campuses makes it very difficult"*. (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). The head of School in the Faculty of Management Studies commented that *"If there are any barriers, one of the barriers will be simply [...] geographical location. It is difficult to participate in faculties across campuses, particularly Pietermaritzburg. Even H.C is quite far, it's not far away but it's very [...] disruptive. You have to leave what you doing and get into the car and go there. Juggling in between takes time."* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

The findings reveal that available time and geographical location are perceived as indicators of the barriers of participation. The two factors are inter-related insofar as the distance between the campuses means great amounts of time are spent traveling from one campus to another.

Authoritarianism

The respondents perceived management as having a very authoritarian attitude that seem to filter down by very senior management figures. Through the study it was evident that there are heightened levels of fear among staff which inhibits them from freely expressing themselves. In addition to authoritarianism, respondents have commented that certain practices that have emerged within the new institution that discredit the university. A former Howard College academic from the Faculty of HDSS said that *“There were corrupt practices in the former UN [with] certain supervisors not fulfilling their responsibilities fully and not giving adequate attention to post graduates and Ph.D. students and just awarding them Ph.D.’s without rigorous engagement.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Despite the negative perceptions, the informants argued that the merging of these two institutions yielded an enrichment of the newly merged institutional culture. The findings also unveiled that knowledge sharing has heightened communication between academics and that there has been improvements in the flow of information. A former Howard College academic in Management Studies summed up the feelings of many of the respondents with the statement that *“Our culture is authoritarian and built around threat, force and legal action to individuals that do not follow the Vice-Chancellors line”*. (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). Another interviewee expressed the opinion that because of this *“There is a self-censorship that takes place, people are afraid to say things and rather go with the flow.”* (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). A number of participants echoed these sentiments. They felt that freedom of expression was being violated and people are silenced because they are scared to talk when disciplinary procedures are in place; people were taken to court hence silencing free talk. In the School of Management Studies, several people remarked on the perceived tension, crisis and conflict at the school, a result a spate of people who had been suspended or disciplined. One academic in the Faculty of HDSS commented that *“there is a sense of alienation that is experienced. They [academics] do not feel that*

they have their own space and they feel that their voices do not matter and they are going through negative emotions.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

A report issued by the Governance and Academic Freedom Committee (GAFC), appointed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Council on the 12th December 2008, concurred with these perceptions (Baqwa, 2009). The *GAFC Report* stated that “the committee finds that a sector within the university fears that when they voice opinions or comments, which go beyond those relating to teaching, learning and research, they will be dealt with in ways which suppress their right to freedom of expression and which may result in disciplinary action being taken against them” (Baqwa 2009:25).

The *Senate Report* (2006:13) revealed that “many academics at all levels and across all campuses are exhausted, demoralized and alienated”. The Minister of Education at the time, Dr. Naledi Pandor, expressed the view that “academics must enjoy their right to express their views freely”. She further stated that all universities are spaces of tolerance, criticism, inquiry, review and debate (Agiza Hlongwane *Sunday Tribune* 27:12:2008). From the findings of the present research it can be surmised that the majority of academic and administrative staff interviewed were of the belief that good governance should involve strong and decisive leadership when necessary. Decision making processes must be characterized by consultation, fairness and transparency, elements that were perceived as lacking in the present University. A former UDW academic in the Faculty of Humanities echoed that “*There is no purpose and vision of where we are going to and that the problem is because of the leadership in this environment*”. (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Governance

Good governance is a crucial aspect of efficient and effective administration. The respondents were asked about their understanding and what constitutes good governance. The Head of School from Management Studies stated that good governance is about “*Being accountable, ethical, and transparent with clear policies that*

everyone is aware of” (sic). (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville). A former Howard College lecture in the Faculty of HDSS pointed out that “Good governance stems from principle of ubuntu, it says you are what you are because of other people and in indigenous African ways, it says a king is a king through the people, without no people there is no king. If he doesn’t carry out what is in the interest of the nation of his people he will lose the seat. So it is about respecting the people who put you there and providing people with opportunities to grow, not serving people as obstacles, consulting and engaging with people and make sure that decisions made reflect the majority of the people who claim to be leading.” (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC). A senior Westville library officer wasn’t thinking of the conceptual origin but rather the end/purpose when he said; “good governance is when you’re managing the institution’s aims and objectives and how you go about executing functions to provide an effective and efficient service” (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). A Westville administrator thought similarly, saying that “it’s when the institution is run in a correct or good manner” (Transcripts, Library Admin, Westville). Thus one might argue that good governance is essential in maintaining smooth functioning of an institution. It plays a vital role in upholding the credibility and quality of a university. Good governance involves the fiscal accountability to the public and transparent audit and in that way this public management literature.

An independent evaluation conducted by the Higher Education Merger Study Group (HEMSG) led by Professor Stuart Saunders noted that “in the case of UKZN strong governance, management and effective and stable administration contributed significantly towards the rapid establishment of the new institution” (Rolf Stumpf, *Mail and Guardian* 14.10.2009). However, not all the informants interviewed in my study agreed with such pronouncements. They pointed out that in the presence of good governance, policies should be approved collectively and in the decision making process, the consent of all academics be taken into consideration. Good governance is the appropriate utilization and management of resources in order to achieve a certain goal that is based on accountable and democratic practices; something that many

respondents felt was missing at UKZN. The findings of the present study revealed that the preceding qualities of good governance were perceived to be lacking at UKZN. Similarly the findings of the Senate Report (2006:3) cited that “many comments were received indicating a perception of ‘autocratic’ governance, often referred to as corporatisation”. At UKZN it was believed that there is lack of openness, consultation, transparency and information sharing. Similar sentiments were shared by the former UDW and UN informants, emphasizing that good governance should be based upon what administration can do to facilitate open and free discussion about range of issues including criticisms against the management.

On the impact of the merger on issues of good governance, a former senior HC academic in the Faculty of HDSS said that the *“Institution has been perceived as being undermined under the capitalist system whereby universities are more marketised. Good governance tends to be lost out because the emphasis is now [on] running the universities like market mechanisms and private enterprises, therefore you are either in or out. Good governance cannot be in existence when the senior management takes care of themselves by allocating themselves performance bonuses yet everyone else struggles and that is not good governance.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of HDSS, HC).

Despite the number of negative perceptions around issues of governance within the new institution, the findings identified some positive factors that have emerged with the merging of UN and UDW. The Head of School in the Faculty of Management Studies mentioned that *“Good governance is a positive step in the new academic dispensation. The merger has improved governance and that there is consultation and participation of staff in my faculty.”* (Transcripts, Faculty of Management Studies, Westville).

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study set out to generate descriptive evidence of staff responses to the merger at UKZN. The merger has had both positive and negative impacts on both academic and support staff at the new institution. It can be concluded from the findings of this study that the positive aspects of mergers outweighed the negative aspects.

Considering the **negative** aspects first, the findings pertaining to staff responses on the challenges and opportunities presented by the merger indicate that increased levels of stress and low levels of job satisfaction are evident among the staff at all ranks. The low levels of job satisfaction expressed by respondents were rooted in areas such as heavy workloads, adapting to the new environments, lack of resources, adjusting to the new surroundings and geographical mobilization. A significant theme in the findings related to a perception of top-down management and an ethos of authoritarianism. Negative issues included increased administration, different institutional cultures, perceptions that the university was losing staff and negative publicity.

Mergers of Higher Education Institutions undoubtedly have brought a number of underlying issues to the fore, many of which were not focused on prior to the merger; issues such as subtle racism, corruption and scandalous behaviour on the part of middle-management. These issues created a negative impact in the media which brought about an imagery of UKZN as having a 'shady' character. The negative publicity was due to some of the negative scandals in the university between the period 2006 to 2007. These included most specifically issues of plagiarism and awarding of higher degrees and financial and sexual improprieties. While these are beyond the scope of the present study, it should be noted that these instabilities had a negative effect on people's perceptions of the university which often fed into their responses to the merger.

On the **positive** side, the descriptive evidence generated by this study revealed that the merger did bring about some opportunities, specifically in terms of geographical distance, research output, improvement in the working environment and teaching and learning. The research incentive provided by the merger allowed for increasing research publications. A greater team spirit emerged in the Faculty of HDSS as opposed to the Faculty of Management Studies. A clear example of this is the way in which the merger paved the way for the encouragement of people to work in collaboration in the writing of research projects. The study of the *Undressing Durban* project serves to illuminate the above because this study allowed for academic staff from the former UDW and former Howard College to work in partnership in contributing to knowledge production which adds to the vital components of teaching, learning and research.

There have been many negative and positive outcomes with the merger of UKZN. All in all, this qualitative work has indicated that despite the mixed responses the general thrust of the merger was more positive than I anticipated when I began this research. At the outset of this dissertation, the following hypothesis was put forward:

since there is a substantial body of prior evidence to suggest that mergers in other institutions of higher learning, both in South Africa and globally, have resulted in high levels of staff stress and dislocation, that it is probable that these phenomena would be apparent within the KwaZulu-Natal situation.

The study has confirmed and verified the hypothesis, by illustrating both the positive and negative aspects brought about by the merger; and arguing that despite the many good things achieved, nevertheless, these have come at a price. That price has been the high and sustained levels of “staff stress and dislocation”. The evidence suggests that these stress levels will persist for some time to come; and that this is in line with the global experience of mergers across the world.

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'Library Admin' (refers Library Administrators from Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses)

'Faculty of Science' (refers to Faculty of Science on both the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses)

(Note: Please see Chapter Four for composition of interview samples. Transcripts are available to examiners on request.)

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Appendix ONE

Institutional Merger Study:

Questionnaire



Demographics:

1. Occupation:

Support staff: Technical	Support staff: Administration	Academic staff: teaching	Academic staff: Management
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2. Age:

Under 25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and over
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3. Gender:

Male	Female
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4. Race:

African	White	Indian	Coloured	Other
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5. What campus did you work at before 2005?

Westville
Edgewood
Pietermaritzburg
Howard College

6. Where do you work now?

Westville
Edgewood
Pietermaritzburg

7. Has your school moved campus? If yes, from where to where?

8. *Institutional culture*

- a. What do you understand by 'institutional culture'?
- b. How would you characterise the institutional culture of your original University (NU or UDW)?
- c. How would you characterise the institutional culture of the current merged University?
- d. Can you mention one factor that strikes you as significantly different?
- e. What do you understand by the concept of good governance?
- f. How do you assess the impact of the merger on issues of governance?
- g. In your view, what opportunities has the merger provided so far to staff generally?
- h. In your view, what are the limitations that have been introduced to staff generally?
- i. To what do you attribute the protest actions that have occurred within the merged institution?

9. *Cost and benefits to the individual*

- a. How has the merger affected you as a staff member? Please expand on your answer.
- b. How do you take part in the decision making of the university?
- c. What barriers do you perceive to such participation?
- d. What structures do you partake in the university, and do you believe you are able to play a meaningful role in this structures?

10. *Staffing*

- e. In your view, what have been the effects of the merger on staff retention?
- f. In your opinion, how has the merger affected employment equity with regards to race and gender?

11 *Costs and benefits to the School/ division*

- g. Has the merger increased or decreased your school/division's efficiency and ability to deliver services? Please expand on your answer.
- h. *(if academic school)* Has the merger increased or decreased your school/division's efficiency and ability to conduct high quality research?

- i. *(if academic school)* Has the merger positively or negatively affected your school/division's ability to attract high quality students? Please expand on your answer.
 - j. How has your school / division been affected by geographical location?
 - k. What examples can you relate that illustrate increased levels of enthusiasm for the core work of your school / division since the merger?
 - l. What examples can you relate that illustrate increased levels of stress among staff and students in your school / division since the merger?
- 10. Perceptions of working conditions*
- a. Do you believe that your conditions of service have improved or deteriorated since the merger? Expand on your answer.
 - b. Do you believe that your working environment has improved or deteriorated since the merger? Expand on your answer.
 - c. Do you believe that your resource base has improved or deteriorated since the merger? Expand on your answer.
 - d. Do you believe that your social and collegial relationships have improved or deteriorated since the merger? Expand on your answer.
 - e. Do you have anything further to add on your own, or your school or division's, experiences of merger.



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28 JULY 2008

MS. S KHAN (200204587)
SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCE

Dear Ms. Khan

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0330/08M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project

"An analysis of the Staff responses to the merger at UKZN"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully


Ms. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Prof. R. Taer-Tomaseff)
cc. Mrs. L. Marriott